



**UNIVERSITY
OF OSLO**

Representing Islam

**A Comparative Study of the Representation
of 'Islam' in Western Cinema Vs. Arab Cinema**

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Master's Thesis in Media Studies

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Autumn 2011

Abstract

Representations of the Middle East and its people have been a large focus of debate for decades in fields from politics to the social sciences. Edward Said's 1979 book on the theory of Orientalism further stirred discussions of the Arab world. This thesis aims to highlight portrayals of Islam and Muslims specifically in the medium of cinema. Furthermore, the following will concentrate how Islam is represented in the film 'The Kingdom' from Western cinema compared to the film 'Al-Akhar' ('The Other') from Arab cinema using Orientalist theory. The researched looked at the question of how the religion was portrayed and whether differentiations were made between the violent sect and the moderate sect of Islam. The methods conducted in the analysis of the narrative structure of the films and their content centered on the semiotic approach. Findings revealed that there were many commonalities in the illustrations of the faith and its followers as well as a few differences. Ultimately, the conclusions drawn demonstrated perhaps a more well-rounded representations of Islam in the film from Western cinema than in the film from Arab cinema.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Ove Solum for all his feedback and constructive criticism. Without his guidance and invaluable advice the completion of this thesis would not have been realized.

A massive thank you to my dearest friend Soonya Vanichkorn who was able to ease my stress and give me the confidence I needed to carry out my research. And my sincerest appreciation to her for revising my chapters all the way from Thailand.

Thank you to my wonderful buddy Sam Yari for always being able to provide me with a little humor when I needed cheering up.

A special thank you Plamena Boneva for being the one true friend I made in Norway and for always being there when I needed comfort. And an even bigger thank you for handing in my thesis when I was stuck in Egypt, I owe her my life.

A heartfelt thank you to my dearest friend Manon Gaeta for always believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself and for sticking by me through thick and thin.

Last but certainly not least, to dear my father; there are no words to express the gratitude I owe you. Thank you for all your encouragement, never-ending support and providing me with opportunities for priceless education.

And to my beloved mother, who although has past on, I know is with me in spirit. Thank you for your undying faith in me and for always believing that my all dreams can come true. I would like to dedicate this thesis to her.

“It is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others' religions as we would have them respect our own, a friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty.”

-Mohandas K. Gandhi

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Brief Overview

The Middle East, a relatively small region that sits between the great West and the Far East, has become a huge subject of debate in the all forms of media. With the September 11th attacks on the twin towers, the war in Afghanistan, the war on Iraq and the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Middle East is a hot topic all over the world. As a result, certain stereotypes about people in the Middle East have manifested and become a reality for many living outside the region. Of course, this is what often happens when a country or region develops into a focal point of media attention. However, it stands to reason that generalizations are for the most part incorrect, skewed or unjustified representations of a people, culture, religion or country. We, as the audience of the news, television programmes or film take representations at face value without truly questioning what exactly is being portrayed and how. Thus, it is up to researchers, to look at the very minute details of the images being brought to us by the media and analyze them to see how they create the whole picture of a people or region like the Middle East.

One of the great founders and theorists to study the representation of Arabs is Edward Said, who wrote *Orientalism*, a revolutionary book that looks at the various false assumptions that Westerners have about the exotic Middle East [Said, 1978]. Said, studies the many romanticized ideas that Europeans and Americans had about the Middle East, which inevitably lead to the colonization of the region and the *othering* of a people. Although the book was written over three decades ago, many of Said's observations are applicable to the current state of affairs and how Arabs as a people are being portrayed whether in the

news or films etc. Furthermore, Said's theory is repeatedly used by researchers who are studying representations of the Middle East in Western culture, as it is an essential piece of literature, which is used as a foundation. The following quote from the 1978 book illustrates how the ideas are relevant to the relationship between the West and the Middle East:

"So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Moslems and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression."

[Said, 1978]

The following research will look specifically at how the Middle East and Islam is represented in film. The main reason or justification for choosing to pursue movies is the fact that it is such an influential art form. Other types of media such as news and television are also influential, however it is my belief that films have a great impact and resonate more with audiences. Furthermore, it is important to note that often on the big screen there are many subliminal messages that are being sent by the film makers that the audience may not be aware of, for example the way certain people are dressed in a movie often affects how they are perceived by the audience perhaps in a subconscious manner. Thus, it is important to analyze the tiny details in films to understand how they can impact an audiences' perception of a culture or people.

As mention before, the Middle East is a hot topic among researchers in the current period; therefore a lot of research is being conducted on how the area is being represented, especially in film. Jack Shaheen has written a very articulate description of how Arabs are vilified by Hollywood in his book *Reel bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* [Shaheen, 2001]. The book documents the various stereotypes in Western cinema and how they have been portrayed over

the last 30 years, describing them as images of 'dirty Arabs' where they often appear as "brute murderers, religious fanatics, and abusers of women" [Shaheen, 2001]. In the book *"Evil" Arabs in American Popular film: Orientalist Fear* the author Tim Jon Semmerling analyzes the representation of Arabs in 5 films in depth including 'Black Sunday' and 'Three Kings'. Semmerling looks at the popular stereotype of 'evil' Arabs being fought by the American 'good guys' who fight for democracy and fairness the 'American way' [Semmerling, 2006]. Lina Khatib also conducts interesting research in her book *Filming the Modern Middle East* which was inspired by Edward Said's Orientalism. The book describes the varying representations of Middle Eastern Politics in Hollywood cinema with chapters looking at the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Gulf War [Khatib, 2006]. The previous research conducted in their area will be looked at in depth in chapter 2. The following will explain how my research project is distinct from other studies that have been conducted.

However, it is important to first to define what is meant by 'Arab', 'Muslim', and 'Islamic fundamentalist/Extremist' as there is a crucial difference that will be essential to my research. Although there many may disagree with the definitions or have a different opinion, this is what the terms will be in reference to in the following research. The term 'Arab' pertains to people from the Middle East region, regardless of their religion whether it be Islam or Christianity. Moreover, 'Muslim' refers to people who follow and adhere to the Islamic faith whether they maybe Sunni, Shia, Kharijite or Sufi. Finally, when referring to 'Islamic Fundamentalists/Extremists' an important distinction must be made between the violent and nonviolent sects. An 'Islamic Fundamentalist' is not necessarily synonymous with violence, in the Middle East this refers to a Muslim who follows in the Islamic faith strictly and often preaches to people. However, there are violent 'Islamic Fundamentalists' who will use terrorism to promote certain ideas or politics in the name of Islam such as groups like Al-Qaeda. In the following research the term 'Islamic Fundamentalist' or 'Islamic Extremist' will be used to refer to the violent kind.

1.2 Objective of Research

The main objective of my thesis will be to analyze how Islam is represented in two films one from Western cinema and another from Arab cinema. In other words, I will be looking at how Western cinema portrays Muslims and compare that with how Arab cinema portrays, in a sense, itself. The centre focus of my thesis will be on meaning, namely on what meanings are derived from the representation of Muslims in both cinemas and thus make a comparison.

Another interesting discovery would be whether both regions' cinemas are able to make distinctions between the 'ordinary' or everyday Muslim and the Islamic Fundamentalist/Extremist. This would indicate that not only does Western Cinema try to separate from the 'Other' but that Arabs Cinema also attempts to make a distinction between 'Arabs/Muslims' ('us') and 'Islamic Fundamentalists' ('them'). This may also reveal that there are more commonalities between the East and West than previously thought. In an article entitled, 'Nationalism and the Otherness', Lina Khatib sums up by arguing that '...two sides end up telling the same subjective "truth" and where both East and West do not seem to be divided that much after all' [Khatib, 2006]. Therefore, one central research question of my thesis is: How Islam and/or Muslims represented in the two films from Western Cinema and Arab Cinema? What meaning is derived from films' verbal and non-verbal structures in their portrayal of Muslims? The second question that will be answered during the course of my analysis is: Do the films from both regions attempt to distinguish or portray a distinction between the 'everyday' Muslim and the Islamic Fundamentalist/Extremist? And finally in the comparative section of my research I will answer perhaps the most important question: What are the commonalities and differences in the representation of Islam in Western cinema compared to Arab cinema?

The two films that will be analyzed in my research are *The Kingdom* from Western cinema, which set in Saudi Arabia is about four FBI agents sent to investigate a terrorist attack that took place at an American housing compound in Riyadh. The other film is *Al-Akhar* (*'The Other'*) from Arab cinema, which centers on the character of rich, young Adam who falls in love with working class Hanan while some family members attempt to separate them. The reasoning behind the choice of both these films is that they are of the same genre of film and that they both depict Islamic Fundamentalists.

The main methodological tool I will be using when analyzing the films is textual analysis. In Alan McKee's book *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's guide* he describes textual analysis on texts (such as films) as "mak(ing) an educated guess(es) at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text" [McKee, 2003]. By using textual analysis I will look at the most evident interpretations audiences will make about the film and the representations being portrayed. More specifically, I will mainly use the semiotic approach, which is a form of textual analysis, to analyze the films as it is often referred to as the 'science of signs'. Researchers look at different signs like colors, sounds or even images and consider them as a form of language to analyze how texts are put together and understood, which is essentially the object of my research [McKee, 2003].

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The following chapter will examine previous research that has been conducted on the topic of the representation of Arabs/Middle East/Islam in media and film. This chapter is essential to this thesis, as it helps in defining and narrowing the focus of research. As previously mentioned the portrayal of Arabs in media has been a 'hot topic' for the past few decades, which has resulted in various types of studies. This chapter will highlight just a few of the compelling and popular studies that have been conducted on the subject. The following will look at various author's arguments and perspective on how/why the Middle East and its religion are being represented.

2.1 Islamophobia

A pertinent idea and theory to review is "Islamophobia", as this thesis examines the representation of Islam in film. The focal book under review is Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg's *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*, which concentrates on religiously centralized political cartoons, a relevant form of media that can be linked to film. The authors define Islamophobia as "a *social* anxiety toward Islam and Muslim cultures that is largely unexamined by, yet deeply ingrained in, Americans" and perhaps the Western world [Gottschalk et al., 2008]. The authors argue that Islamophobia does not stem from personal trauma but rather collective memory that American culture has disseminated resulting from remote social experiences [Gottschalk et al., 2008]. This is an interesting point as it emphasizes the fact that Americans may not have an individual fear of Muslims but that it is something that culture and society has ingrained in them as popular memory. Gottschalk and

Greenberg claim this collective memory accumulates over several historical events that date back to the crusades, colonialism, 1970's oil embargo, Israel-Palestine conflicts and 9/11 attack on the world trade centre.

The book analyzes several political cartoons and the authors attempt to uncover the deeper meaning in the cartoons rather than the superficial and obvious messages. The authors also point out the various symbols of Islam that are often employed such as the scimitar, as well as other common stereotypes about Muslims. These symbols and stereotypes found in the cartoons studied are often translated and portrayed on the big screen.

Ultimately the book's chief argument about why Islamophobia continues to exist is that the media transmits the same images concerning Islam that fortify "negative views among Americans...through both what they say, write, or show *and* what they do not" [Gottschalk et al., 2008].

The book, however, has two main limitations and drawbacks. First, though the idea of Islamophobia is very relevant to contemporary society, the authors focus on American culture. The United States may perhaps be the epicenter of this fear it is not limited to it, the idea of a collective memory that fears Islam could be applied to other Western countries. Second, Gottschalk and Greenberg constrain their research to cartoons, though a popular medium, it maybe have been more eye opening if they had cast a wider net and looked at Islamophobia in film or television.

2.2 Arabs in Film

Jack Shaheen is perhaps one of the most prolific authors on the subject of the representation of Arabs in the media namely films and television. In his book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, Shaheen lists and discusses over 900 films released between 1896 and 2001. The author conducted this research

over the course of two decades. The book emphasizes the importance of being aware of the Arab stereotype, as the author believes that by vilifying an ethnic, racial or religious group “innocent people suffer” [Shaheen, 2001]. Throughout Shaheen’s analysis he pays particular attention to what he claims are the five main Arab characters portrayed in films: villains, sheikhs, maidens, Egyptians and Palestinians. Ultimately, the author argues that what is often missing from these films “are ordinary Arab men, women and children living ordinary lives” [Shaheen, 2001].

Shaheen’s next book on the subject, *Guilty: Hollywood’s Verdict on Arabs After 9/11*, examines films post 9/11 in the same manner as his previous book. In book Shaheen makes interesting argument that “policies enforce stereotypes; stereotypes impact policies” [Shaheen, 2008]. In a sense the author believes that movies and entertainment are being used as propaganda and that Washington and Hollywood “spring from the same DNA” [Shaheen, 2008]. Shaheen also mentions Islamophobia as well as Arabophobia, which he defines as “irrational fears and/or prejudices toward Arabs, Muslims and Islam that stir symptoms of loathing” [Shaheen, 2008].

In his latter book Shaheen expands his research a little as he analyzes the impact of 9/11 on the American film industry as a reflection of American foreign policy. He discusses 29 movies produced after 9/11 using the same five Arab characters mentioned in his earlier book. The author not only looks at the negatives images but also attempts to inspect the positive images of Arabs. Furthermore, Shaheen briefly looks at how Arabs are portrayed on television in what he calls the “Arab-American Bogeyman” [Shaheen, 2008].

There two main criticisms to Shaheen’s extensive research on the subject matter. Although the author does examine an abundant number of films his analysis only seems to scratch the surface. While for each movie the author makes very valid observations about Arabs in the films, the descriptions are brief and do not read between the lines. The author fails to explain *how* Arabs are being represented as ‘villains’ or ‘sheikhs’; he merely indicates the presence of a

certain Arab stereotype and not how it is actually being portrayed. Furthermore, one could also deduce from both books but mainly the earlier book that there is a bias. This may perhaps be due to his rather brief discussions of the films. For the most part, Shaheen language and methodology suggest a hint of subjectivity. Conceivably what was lacking from his research was a variety in perspectives.

Another important contributor to the topic is Tim Jon Semmerling in his book *"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film: Orientalist Fear*. Semmerling takes a unique approach to the research but focus on what he calls the "haters" not the "hated" [Semmerling, 2006]. In the book the author conducts an in-depth analysis of six films in order to support his argument. Semmerling claims that after the 1970's the devastation of the Vietnam War, Watergate, the Pentagon Papers, Black September, oil embargos etc., Americans lost confidence in their government and institutions. Such political discourse and recollections lead to an "atmosphere of fear in their [Americans] real lives". And with the Middle East's growing wealth and power during this period the West began to perceive it as a threat to American 'ideologies'. The author believes that what resulted from this was that Americans felt impotent and thus desired to seek revenge on the Middle East in the face of their humiliation. Ultimately, Semmerling argues that the stereotypes perpetuated about Arabs are needed in order to draw attention away from the 'lack' within the American collective identity. Furthermore, the 'othering' of Arabs is a reflection or projection of in American self in that they are not "upholding standards or are unable to achieve expectations dictated by our [American] ideologies and myths" [Semmerling, 2006].

The author uses an interesting approach with which to analyze the films he has chosen. The book shows a completely different perspective of why Arabs are portrayed in a certain light. The use of psychological complexes that Semmerling claims reside within the American collective self examines opposing points of view, which is the filmmakers themselves. However, although the method Semmerling uses is unique, it could perhaps be viewed as somewhat far-fetched. The author goes deep into the American psyche with its common history and shared inadequacies, which could in part be true, may not apply to the

majority of the population. Furthermore, like many authors on this topic, the book focuses American films and fails to explain how this would apply to other Western countries that portray the 'evil' Arab. Semmerling also neglects the idea that 'evil' Arabs have been present in films before the 1970's. The stereotyping of Arabs has perpetuated for several decades even during America's flourishing golden age, which contradicts the author's argument that the portrayals are a result of a loss of American self-confidence.

Another relevant book on the topic of Arab representation is *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinema of Hollywood and the Arab World* by Lina Khatib. Her research is one of the few that also look at Arab cinema, which in this respect shares a commonality with this thesis. Khatib take a different stance to pervious research mentioned, as she believes it's important to look at how Arabs represent themselves. The book focuses on how various historical events are depicted in both the East and West as it undermines the fixed understandings of the events. Ultimately, Khatib claims that the approach "shows how the Truths constructed by each side about the Self and Others are produced by specific historical contexts" [Khatib, 2006]. The various chapters in the book focus on specific issues concerning the portrayal of Arabs such as political landscapes, gender representations, Arab-Israeli Conflict as well as Islamic Fundamentalism.

Khatib's research is interesting and also a unique approach to tackle as well as explain the subject matter. The study examines what many authors have neglected to look at which is Arab cinema. The author's language and arguments appear to be objective and attempt to look at a multitude of perspectives. The only criticism that can be said about the book is its structure. What is lacking most from Khatib's research is the fact that she does not extensively explain the films she uses to support her arguments, which can leave the reader confused at times.

2.3 Aims of this Thesis

What differentiates this thesis from pervious research is that the analysis will focus on comparing representations of Islam in particular, from both regions of the East and West. Most research centers around either Arab cinema or Hollywood movies. And while the research is interesting and informative, it fails to draw similarities or differences between the two representations. This thesis will concentrate on the comparative aspects of the portrayal of Muslims in film from both regions. It will also look at the degrees of “othering” that both the West and East may engage in when representing Arabs.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Framework

This chapter will focus on Edward Said's the theory of Orientalism, its definitions, dogmas, characteristics as well as its criticisms. This theory is instrumental in the analysis of the films and the representation of Arabs and Muslims. It will also briefly cover and introduce the Postcolonial theory.

3.1 Postcolonial Theory

Before venturing into the theory of Orientalism, it is important to first look at postcolonial theory, which is the umbrella under which Orientalism falls. Gauri Viswanathan provides a definition of postcolonial studies; it is the "study of the cultural interaction between colonizing powers and the societies they colonized, and the traces that this interaction left on the literature, art, and human sciences of both societies" [Stam, 2000]. Postcolonial studies deal with the thematizing of the relations between the colonized and those colonizing, during imperial times as well as the after effects [Stam, 2000]. Furthermore, not only does the postcolonial look at Third World countries that have achieved their independence but it is also associated with the Third World diaspora that resides in the First World [Stam, 2000]. There are many theorists that have studied the postcolonial other than Edward Said such as, Homi Bhabha, who looked at the "hybrid nature of colonial exchange", Foucault, who changed the notion of ideology with "discourse", as well as many other theorists [Stam, 2000]. The postcolonial theory is a board and general study of the affairs and effects of colonialism, which in a sense is relevant to the research questions posed in this thesis. However, Edward Said's theory is far more specific in terms of cultural

significance as it deals with the Orient, which includes the Far East but more prominently the Middle East.

There are several criticisms to Postcolonial theory, many of which might be similar to those of Orientalist theory. One of the main problems with the theory however, is “psychologism” which criticizes theorist for over simplifying the relations between the two worlds [Stam, 2000]. In other words, theorists have come up with simple psychological explanations for very complicated and extensive political struggles. Another criticism centers around “ahistoricity”, which involves theorists making very conceptual and board statements about the relations between the Third and First World without “specifying a historical period or geographical location” [Stam, 2000]. There are of course many more problems and criticisms concerning the Postcolonial theory, however they will not be included as this thesis will focus more particularly on the Orientalist theory.

3.2 Orientalism

Edward Said’s very influential 1978 book *Orientalism* is perhaps one of the most controversial scholarly books in the last three decades, as it has sparked many debates and criticisms. And while it stands to reason that many may think this theory is old and outdated, the fact of the matter is it is very much evident in the contemporary world.

In his book, Said follows a large body of 19th century European Orientalist scholars, namely British and French colonialists, who have study and written about the Arab peoples. And later on Said looks at American scholars of the 20th century. This is due to the fact that Britain and France subjugated the Orient from the 19th century until WW II and since then America has dominated the Orient with the same approach. As a result, Orientalism can be seen within the

context of Western domination through colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism [Kennedy, 2000]. Said describes this as follows:

"Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point of Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."

[Said, 1978]

Said's theory attempts to answer the question as why when many think of the Middle East, there is a preconceived archetype of what kinds of people live there, their beliefs and behavior. The central argument of Orientalism is that it is not blameless or impartial but it is the result of a process, which is motivated by and reflects certain interests. Specifically, Said argues that the West, Europe and the U.S. look at the Middle East through a distorted lens, which he calls Orientalism. In other words, Orientalism is a framework that is used to understand or describe the alien and unfamiliar, also referred to as 'the other'. Ultimately, what Orientalism does is draw a line in the proverbial sand between the East and the West. Orientalist scholars have emphasized the distinctions between the West (the Occident) and the East (the Orient), 'us' and 'them'. This led to a polarizing effect, whereby "the West became more Western, the East more Eastern, the West rational, mature and normal, the East irrational, backward, depraved" [MacKenzie, 1995]. Furthermore, what results from this opposition between 'our' world and 'theirs', is a sense of superiority and that 'their' world is dependent on 'ours'.

Throughout the book Said identifies several definitions of Orientalism, many of which focus on different aspects of the theory. However, Said's most reoccurring definition is:

"My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West,

which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness... As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge... My whole point about this system is not that it is a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence – in which I do not for a moment believe – but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in specific historical, intellectual and even economic setting”

[Said, 1978]

Ultimately, what Said is attempting to state is that Orientalism was brought about by the colonialist powers of Britain and later France to emphasize difference between the East for political and perhaps economic gain.

One of Said's most important ideas is that fact that Orientalism, as he claims, is 'man-made'. He reiterates throughout the book that the Occident or West constructed Orientalism and that it is not a 'fact of nature' as many scholars dating back to the 19th century would have people believe. It is also pointed out that the progress and expansion of Orientalism is a result of a 'textual attitude'. In other words, images and notions of the Orient and its peoples are derived from other books and not from practical evidence or firsthand experience. Said argues that these views existed pre-imperialist development and have lasted post the imperialist era. This is supported by evidence in 18th century medieval text and can still be seen in contemporary American media with the stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims. Thus, the Orient is constructed as the silent other, a thing that is not able to represent or define itself and as a result the West must define it for 'them'. An example of this is the term 'Mohammadism', created by 19th century Europeans as a way of making it easier for Westerners to understand or relate to Islam. The term came from the idea that the founder of Christianity was Christ; therefore since Mohammad was the founder of Islam, Islam became Mohammadism. During this time it was a solely Western term that Muslims were not aware of and had not say in the matter.

3.3 Four Main Dogmas of Orientalism

Said characterizes four main dogmas of Orientalism, some of which have been highlighted in the above text but will be emphasized again.

Firstly, “the absolute and systematic difference between the West which is rational, developed, humane, superior and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior” [Said, 1978]. As mentioned previously, European imperialists primarily used this as a way showcasing their power over the Orient. The more “alien” and “uncivilized” the East was viewed to be, the more the perception was that the West was superior.

Secondly, “abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a ‘classical’ Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities” [Said, 1978]. Orientalism for this thesis focuses on the ‘near East’ however; the term is also applied to the ‘far East’. In other words, Orientalism lumps together all non-Western countries and peoples, without much regard for the immense differences in culture, religion, etc. This again is a way, according to Said, of maintaining supremacy and widening the gap between the two regions.

Thirdly, “the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically ‘objective’” [Said, 1978]. That is to say, Westerners have given ideas and scholarly writings about the East the standing of being scientific truth. By supporting the Orient as a scientific fact, the West was and is in a sense making it ‘indisputable’. Thus, again attempting to justify the West’s dominance and hegemony over the East.

Finally, “the Orient is at the bottom something either to be feared or to be controlled” [Said, 1978]. The idea that the Orient is so vastly different, that its

peoples are 'savage', 'untrustworthy' and 'backward' to the point where they are either a threat to 'us' or that they need to be dominated by advanced races.

3.4 Latent and Manifest Orientalism

Said makes the distinction between latent and manifest Orientalism in an effort to maintain this overall theory of Eurocentricity and racism. Said argues:

"The distinction I am making is really between an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable positivity, which I shall call latent Orientalism, and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth, which I shall call manifest Orientalism"

[Said, 1978]

Ultimately, *latent* Orientalism can be described as a collective and inanimate set of ideas and images of the Orient that remain stagnant and durable. Basically the same age-old ideas of the East being separate, silently different, backward, passive, inferior etc. are all part of this unconscious preconceived notion of the region. While on the other hand, *manifest* Orientalism can change from writer to writer and time period to time period. *Manifest* Orientalism involves changing understandings of the Orient by Orientalists and it is an expression in writing or action of *latent* Orientalism.

3.5 Criticisms of Orientalism

When Said first released *Orientalism* in 1978 it was controversial and there have been many debates and disagreements over the theory and the way Said describes the field of study.

One of the main reoccurring criticisms of Said's version of the theory is his definition or more so his 'definitions' of it. Critics have viewed Said's definitions are often contradictory and perhaps even mutually incompatible [Menon, 1992]. There are often commonalities and links between Said's varying definitions however; they fluctuate between 'historical and ahistorical' viewpoints [Kennedy, 2000]. According to Menon's article there are three contradicting definitions of Orientalism; 1) "an interdisciplinary area of academic knowledge", 2) "a mentality traversing great many centuries" and 3) "taking the late 18th century as a rough starting point, as a western style for having authority over the Orient" [Menon, 1992]. Ultimately, the main issue with these definitions is the idea that at times Said believes that scholarly Orientalism allowed for colonialism and at others he claims that colonialism was the leading factor in the development of scholarly Orientalism [Kennedy, 2000]. The reason behind this confusion is perhaps due to Said's conflicting methodologies in using Foucault's strategy and mode of analysis of power and representation with Gramsci's conception of power, domination and repression [Kennedy, 2000].

Another possible point of contention with Said's Orientalism is the idea, mention above, that the East can not define/represent itself so the West must do it for 'them' and that "the West writes while the Orient is written about" [Khatib, 2006]. This idea however totally ignores Eastern imperialism of the Ottoman Empire for example and suggests that Western imperialism was exceptional. Furthermore, this absolute idea completely negates the idea that the East can challenge and also engage in representation as well. Halliday claims that as much as the West is capable to disseminating myths about the East, the East is also capable of doing so [Halliday, 1995]. He mentions the notion of 'Eastoxification',

which is “the uncritical reproduction of myths about the region in the name of anti-imperialism” [Halliday, 1995]. In other words, just as the West has the ability to engage in the ‘othering’ of the East so too is the East able to view the West as the ‘other’.

Additionally, one other problem that arises with Said’s work is the assumption that all scholarly work written about the East is false in its portrayal of the region. Richardson argues that there is a possibility that representations by scholars can be true just as much as they are false, as there is no absolute when it comes to representation [Richardson, 1990]. Said at some moments in the book points out this notion, as he claims to believe that not all scholarship on the Middle East is “corrupt, or at least as blind to human reality as the kind I have been mainly depicting” [Said, 1978]. Here again Said seems to contradict him self or change his opinion, thus often making some of his arguments ambiguous and erratic.

Nevertheless, however contradictory or temperamental Said’s argument may be, Orientalism was still revolutionary and perhaps ground breaking in this field of study. And while there are many more countless criticisms of Said’s work, his theory is very much applicable in the contemporary world and will be used to analyze the films chosen for this thesis.

3.6 Use of the Theory in this Thesis

It is perhaps obvious how the theory of Orientalism can be used to analyze the film *The Kingdom* deriving from Western cinema. As Said's premise lies with the idea that when it comes to the West representing the East the illustration can often be flawed. However, this thesis also attempts to analyze a film from Arab cinema, *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'). The use of this theory in order to analyze the film from the Middle East itself could be problematic. And yet it is possible for this theory to have some ground in its application to *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'). As one of the objectives of this thesis is to determine whether or not there are commonalities and difference between the two film portrayals of Islam, it would be viable to note the application of the theory in the analysis of the film from Arab cinema.

Another very critical point to make note of is the use of a single perspective with regards to the theory in the analysis of the two films in question. It is evident that Orientalism has a varying array of perspectives and criticisms. Said makes use Foucault and Gramsci's ideas to attempt to support his theory. And while these perspectives are fundamental they are not the focal point of thesis. The analysis to follow will focus on Said's perspective on the theory, largely due to the fact that his ideas were highly influential and ground breaking. Furthermore, Foucault, Gramsci as well as other theorists do not provide the same in depth account of the theory as Said. The research questions centre around ideas of difference, while other theorists focus on discussions of power, which although very relevant are not chief to the aims of this thesis. There will be however, a short inspection of their theories with respect to Orientalism in the discussion section of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

The ultimate purpose of this thesis is to study the representation of Islam in Arab and Western cinema. There are, of course, a variety of methods through which we can retrieve such information. However, for the purposes of this thesis and nature of its research questions, representation and textual analysis with a semiotic approach will be the methods of choice for analyzing the two films “The Kingdom” [Western Cinema] and “Al-Akhar” (‘The Other’) [Arab Cinema]. This chapter will explain the research design used in the analysis of the films. A short discussion of reasons behind the selection of this empirical material will also be included. The following will also take in depth look at the semiotic approach and the tools that it uses to effectively analyze texts, as well as the narrative structure of the films in question.

4.1 Selection of Method

In order to properly answer the research questions posed, a qualitative method was believed to be the most appropriate, as the answers are more like to be abstract than definitive. Textual analysis is described as a qualitative method of interpreting ‘texts’ to answer research questions that involving meaning and representation [Jensen, 2002]. The main aim of this thesis is to magnify representation of ‘Islam’ in films, which are considered ‘texts’. Furthermore, Alan McKee defines it as ‘interpreting texts...in order to try and obtain a sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them’ [McKee, 2003]. This again reinforces the angle of focus in this thesis as it pinpoints the culture of ‘Islam’ as the focal point of interest.

4.2 Representation

One could deduce from the research questions presented at the introduction of this thesis that the analysis will ultimately involve a study of culture. And when studying culture one must look at representation, as it is what brings together meaning and culture. According to Stuart Hall:

“Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people...Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things”

[Hall, 1997]

As evident from this description, representation plays a key role in the analysis of not only the films in this thesis but media as whole. Whether representations are positive or negative, they continuously portray something to the audience, which has the possibility of influencing them in some way.

When referring to cultural representation it is important to talk about conceptual maps, language and codes. All three of these ideas are ‘shared’ within a culture, in other words a specific culture will often have very similar ways of interpreting the world through different concepts and codes [Hall, 1997]. Language within the context of culture is of course not limited to the verbal and written language we commonly refer to; it also includes images and non-verbal communication, which is shared between peoples. Furthermore, these sets of social conventions in cultures are not fixed by nature they are created by man and in order become a functioning member of the culture you must be aware of the concepts, languages and codes. In other words, “to belong to a culture is to belong to roughly the same conceptual and linguistic universe, to know how concepts and ideas translate into different languages and how language can be interpreted to refer to or reference the world” [Hall, 1997].

When trying to understand how things come to hold meaning and where meaning originates three main theories of representation arise; the reflective, the intentional and the constructivist approach [Hall, 1997]. This thesis will use the constructivist approach to comprehend representation in the films. The reflective approach focuses on the idea that language acts as a mirror to the real world, while the intentional approach suggests that meaning comes from what the speaker or author intends [Hall, 1997]. However, the constructivist approach proposes that “things don’t mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs” [Hall, 1997]. This implies that social actors are those who use concepts, language and codes to create meaning and communicate meaning to others. There are two main points of significance to the constructivist approach to understanding meaning. The first is the idea of difference, which holds that concepts exist because they can be distinguished from other concepts, e.g. ‘hot’ is meaningful due to its difference from the concept of ‘cold’. The second argues that concepts are often organized to create a sequence which ultimately constructs meaning e.g. in traffic lights, red is followed by amber which is followed by green [Hall, 1997].

Both the films under analysis depict Arabs/Muslims, they ultimately say something significant and substantial about the culture in the Middle East. What is interesting however is the fact that the two films are from different cinema industries, thus giving the audience an image of how the West *represents* the East and how the East *represents* itself.

4.3 Semiotics

Semiotic analysis is a form of textual analysis, which is a qualitative method of research used to analyze texts. Semiotics can be described as ‘the science of signs’, where signs are interpreted and suggest meaning to a receiver [Berger, 2000]. One of the fathers of Semiology was Ferdinand de Saussure a Swiss linguist who paved the way in the field semiotic analysis. Although Saussure was primarily concerned with the analysis of verbal and written language rather than images, his ideas still carry significance [Gillespie, 2006]. Charles Peirce, however, an American philosopher and also founder of semiotics focused more on non-verbal images and his ideas will be discussed later.

According to Saussure, signs are made up of two things the *signifier*, which is the sound or image and the *signified*, which is the concept that is brought to the mind of the receiver [Berger, 2000]. To be more specific a sign will consist of a *material* signifier and an *immaterial* signified [Gillespie, 2006]. In other words, a signifier can be a shape or sound wave or physical entity and this will be linked to an idea or concept, which is the signified. For example, the signifier of ‘cat’ is a word with a sequence of letters, the signified however is a furry four-legged animal commonly taken as a domestic pet. Furthermore, in terms of language (not images) the connection between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, as there is nothing about the shape of sound of the word ‘Cat’ that resembles the concept of ‘Cat’ [Bignell, 1997]. However, these signs are part of the social fabric of society as we have learned them at a young age, one cannot adopt their own sign for ‘Cat’, otherwise it will not be meaningfully understood by others. Therefore, “the capacity of linguistics signs to be meaningful depends on their existence in a social context, and on their conventionally accepted use in that social context” [Bignell, 1997]. Another important note is the idea that, like the constructivist approach, meaning is created when differences are made between one sign and others, so ‘Cat’ is a sign due to the fact that it is different from ‘Dog’ or ‘Bat’ etc [Bignell, 1997].

Ultimately, the signifier and the signified are an important part of the analysis of the two films, as some of the signs that will appear in the films will be deconstructed in a similar sense. Some of the words the characters use, the images, certain objects and even clothing worn are all signifiers that lead to a signified. These signifieds that carry along with them connotations and concepts that send certain messages about what is trying to be said through the films.

As mentioned above Charles Peirce, who preceded Saussure, had significant work in the field of semiotics. Peirce paid particular attention to images and non-verbal signs, which is important to the analysis that will follow as a large part of film involves the production of images and not just verbal language. Peirce argued that there were three types of signs. The first are *symbols*, which are conventional and are learned, such as the different colours of traffic lights [Berger, 2000]. The second are *indexes*, which involves a causal relationship between the sign and what it stands for, these can often be figured out, for instance smoke is an indexical sign of something burning [Berger, 2000]. And finally there are *icons*, which are often just two or three-dimensional representations, such as photographs [Berger, 2000].

The most significant point in Peirce's work on semiotics is the idea that there is no absolute meaning of signs [Gillespie, 2006]. In other words, it is impossible to state with final certainty the meaning of a sign. According to Peirce, signs can change over time, within different situations and across different cultures; they have a lot of flexibility of meaning [Gillespie, 2006].

Moreover, there are two other concepts that are important to semiotic analysis and finding meaning; they involve denotative and connotative meaning. Denotation refers to "the literal meaning of a term or object" and can often also be referred to as the signifier [Berger, 2000]. While Connotation refers to "the cultural meaning that becomes attached to the term" can also be known in a way as the signified [Berger, 2000]. For example, the denotation 'God' is a well-recognized word in the English language by many people and its literal meaning

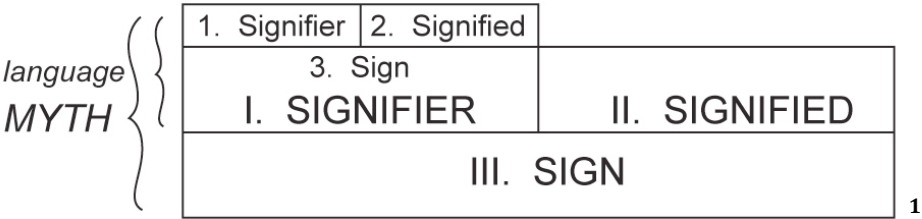
is commonly thought of at a sort of Devine being. However, the connotation applied to ‘God’ may be different to people from the Christian religion or Muslim or Hindu and can hold various meanings to these cultures. As evident from the example, connotative meaning will almost always differ from culture to culture as they often retain varying codes and conventions.

4.4 Mythologies

Connotation leads into French critic Roland Barthes’s semiotic ideas of the “myth”, which is essential to the analysis of films. Barthes defines myth as “a type of speech”, “a system of communication, that is a message” and “a mode of signification” [Barthes, 1993]. He also argues that mythical speech is disseminated and supported by cinematic medium, as well as other types of media [Barthes, 1993].

In order to properly explain his argument, Barthes returns to Saussure, and his connections between the linguistic representations of the signifier and the signified object. Working with this Barthes proposed the concept that a myth is a further sign rooted in language [Barthes, 1993]. To create a myth the sign is used as signifier, with addition to new meaning results in the signified [Barthes, 1993]. The following diagram illustrates this:

Figure 1



¹ Barthes, Roland. (1993). *Mythologies*. (pp. 115). London: Vintage.

Furthermore, this new meaning, according to Barthes, is not added randomly, there is reason behind it and that myths are created to “perpetuate societies” [Barthes, 1993].

When interpreting linguistic, visual and audio signs they often prompt connotations attached to these signs, Barthes calls this “social phenomenon, the bringing together of signs and their connotations to shape a particular message, the making of ‘myth’ ” [Bignell, 1997]. Myth, within the context of semiotics, refers to the ways in which people come to think of certain peoples, places or products etc. For example, if an Arab in a film is seen stepping out of a Mercedes Benz, the mythic meaning created would be that this Arab is wealthy and lives a life of luxury, due to the connotations attached to the very expensive car. Furthermore, according to Barthes “myth serves the ideological interests of a particular group in society, which he [Barthes] terms ‘the bourgeoisie’ ” [Bignell, 1997]. These can involve a variety of different groups such as industrial and political institutions. And this is an important point when looking at the different cultural representations in the films that will be analyzed, as the film industry can be considered as a group in society.

4.5 Semiotics and Cinema

Semiotics can be used to analyze a wide variety of texts in media, including advertisements, magazines, television etc. However, this section will briefly look at how films specifically are analyzed using the semiotic approach. The obvious signs and codes that are involved in media in general, are like things like dialogue, characterization, costume and facial expression etc [Bignell, 1997]. Christen Metz, influential French film theorist, identified some codes and signs specific to cinema that often create meaning such as “editing, lighting, monochrome or colour, sound and composition” as well as camera angles and

positions [Bignell, 1997]. For instance, certain types of lighting can work to signify connotations such as realism, fear or tension etc. Furthermore, according to Metz, the signifier in cinema is always 'imaginary' [Bignell, 1997]. In film something is always represented through the use of signs and codes instead of the audience being presented with real time and space, thus making all films fiction, imaginary [Bignell, 1997].

An essential part of a film of course is its spectators and their understanding of the signs and their connotations.

"Cinema uses codes and conventions of representation which are shared by both film-makers and audiences, so that the audience actively constructs meaning by reference to codes which structure mythic meaning in the social world in which film-going exists."

[Bignell, 1997]

These ideas are linked to culture as in order for the sign and codes to be interpreted; there must be a shared system of understanding. Furthermore, the significance of signs in film is also dependent on social context during which the film was created as well as who it is viewed by [Bignell, 1997]. Decoding certain signs in film can change over time; the connotations that are derived will often depend on the mentality of the culture at present time.

4.6 Limitations of Semiotic Analysis

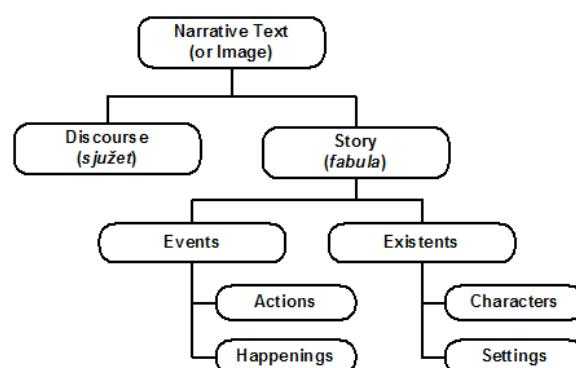
As with every research method there are always limitations and problems that will emerge with analysis. An issue that is perceived to be a large problem that emerges with the application of semiotic analysis is its replicability or repeatability. Different people and audiences interpret things differently and this is applicable to researcher as well. The element of subjectivity can also be factored into this equation. Ultimately, researchers themselves have different

sense-making processes and thus two people will never interpret a text in the exact same way, they will not yield the same results. Furthermore, as a researcher I am aware of the possible bias that may evolve from of the analysis. However, textual analysis using the semiotic approach regards making an educated guess about the ‘mostly likely’ or ‘most common’ interpretations that would be accepted by most and also that no single interpretation is the correct one.

4.7 Story and Discourse

In order to properly analyze a film, it is also important to briefly look at film theorist Seymour Chatman’s text on story and discourse. Chatman discusses how narratives can be analyzed structurally. His main argument revolves around the idea that there is a huge distinction between *story*, which is *what* is being told and *discourse*, which is *how* it is being told [Chatman, 1978]. The following diagram illustrates his point:

Figure 2



2

² Chatman, Seymour. (1978). *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (pp. 19). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Chatman goes on to describe how the narrative is a semiotic structure and what narrative itself means. When linking the narrative to semiotics, Chatman proposes that signifieds “are three – event, character, and detail of setting, while the signifiers are “those elements in the narrative statement (whatever the medium) that can stand for one of these three” [Chatman, 1978]. This is an important point to consider when attempt to extract meaning from the narrative text.

Another important distinction Chatman makes that is rather relevant to this thesis, is the difference between *real author* and *implied author*, and *real reader* and *implied reader*. The real author is he/she who creates an ideal or “an implied version of ‘himself’”, while the implied author is “reconstructed by the reader from the narrative” [Chatman, 1978]. The counterpart to the implied author is the implied reader, which is the audience “presupposed by the narrative itself” and not the actual physical audience member watching the movie [Chatman, 1978].

Ultimately, these ideas are important when attempting to analyze the films in this thesis as they help decipher the signs and codes as well as the structure of the narratives.

4.8 Research Design

It is first perhaps critical to note the justifications behind the selection of the two films under analysis. The films analyzed in this thesis were chosen based on two important categories. The first was that the film must include and/or portray a Fundamentalist or Extremist Islamic organization. As this thesis is based on the representation of Islam and Muslims it was vital for the films to include such subjects. The second characteristic of the two films is similar genres. It is of course almost impossible to find films with very similar storylines that might be relevant to this thesis. Thus, the films chosen were categorized as Action/Dramas, with a balance in both genres. The films have very different plots, the representations are what is vital and comparable.

The Kingdom and Al-Akhar ('The Other') will first be analyzed separately and then compared together. For each film there will be an investigation into the main characters, certain important scenes, specific groups, the rhetoric used in dialogue as well as the myths derived. As explained by Chatman's narrative structure, the characters as well as certain events in the films are indicative of the signifieds that need to be analyzed. The semiotic approach will be utilized to try and make sense of the signs presented in the films, whether they be verbal or non-verbal. Immediately preceding these two sections is the comparative portion of this thesis, where the characters and groups etc. will be evaluated against each other. Finally, the discussion chapter will make use of the theory of Orientalism, previously explained, to analyze the comparable points deduced from the films.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis

The following chapter will focus on using the method of textual analysis and narrative theory to analyze the films. Part 1 will look at the film from Hollywood cinema “The Kingdom”, and Part 2 will analyze “Al Akhar” (“The Other”) from Arab cinema, while Part 3 will compare the two films. The first two parts of this analysis will look at a variety of things pertaining to the films; there will be an analysis of some of the main characters/groups, pivotal scenes, the rhetoric of the movies as well as the myths deduced from the signs.

PART 1

Analysis of “The Kingdom”

5.1.1 Film Synopsis

The film begins when a suicide bomber dressed in a Saudi police officer uniform, detonates a bomb in Western housing compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Francis Manner, an FBI agent at the compound, calls up fellow FBI agent Ronald Fleury to help find those behind the attack. After the phone call, a second, much larger bomb explodes in the compound and agent Francis dies. Agent Fleury visits Francis’s home to offer his sympathy to his son. Due to politics and diplomatic relations Agent Fleury has a hard time trying to get into Saudi Arabia to conduct an investigation. Meanwhile, in Riyadh, a General at the state police interrogates Sergeant Haytham using torture tactics on his involvement in the bombings. Colonel Faris Al Ghazi stops the General in order to prove the Sergeant’s innocence in the matter. In the States, Fleury tries to convince various

diplomats that they should allow an FBI Evidence Response Team to go to Riyadh and help with solving the case. After several efforts, Fleury as well as three other Agents, Grant Sykes, Janet Mayes and Adam Leavitt are able to negotiate a secret five-day trip to Saudi Arabia to locate a man named Abu Hamza, who they think is behind the bombings. Colonel Faris and Sergeant Haytham are assigned by the Prince Bin Khaled to supervise Fleury and his team. Upon arrival in Riyadh, the team quickly realizes that Saudi authorities are unhappy and suspicious of their presence, as they believe it is a matter for the state. Fleury and his team are held back by protocol and restricted from looking at evidence. The male members of the team are invited to visit with the Prince in his palace. Defying what he was told to do, Fleury asks the Prince if they would be allowed more freedom and involvement in the case, which the Prince reluctantly grants. The team also learns that they can not solve the case or find Hamza without gaining the trust of their Saudi counterparts, and that they must work together in order to get any headway. On the way back from the bust of a minor terrorist cell, the team as well as Faris and Haytham are attacked by enemy fire and Agent Leavitt is kidnapped. Faris and the remaining FBI agents pursue the cars attacked them to find their fellow agent. They end up in a 'dangerous' neighborhood and must fire back at the terrorists. They enter a building where they are able to retrieve Agent Leavitt, and later discover that Hamza was in the building along with his family. In a shoot out, Hamza is killed and as a consequence Colonel Faris dies in the line of fire. Before returning to their homeland Fleury visits Faris's family to offer his condolences.

In the following there will be an analysis of two of the main characters. Characters are important to the narrative structures, as according to Chatman they are often representative of some of the signifieds. Furthermore, there will be a discussion of the character traits. Chatman argues that habits are symptomatic of a trait, which the audience has the capability to recognize [Chatman, 1978].

5.1.2 Character Analysis: Ronald Fleury

Fleury, the protagonist, is the personification of the America and all that it claims to stand for; he is also the embodiment of the typical all-American hero. When the audience first encounters Fleury he is at his son's school taking part in his son's show-and-tell with what we assume is his wife. Immediately, the audience deduces that Fleury is a family man participating in a common American school tradition. The audience then learns that Fleury is a law enforcement officer, an Agent at the FBI. This relieves that he is also a patriot, sworn to defend his country and all it values. All of these character traits can be considered signs, which when thought of collectively suggest a single concept. As indicated by Saussure's semiotic approach, images lead the viewer to a concept, which the signs are associated with [Hall, 1997]. Therefore, images of Fleury with his children and as an FBI agent result in a signified, leading his character traits to symbolize America throughout the movie.

Fleury's character does not appear to go through any major changes, he remains diplomatic and consistent throughout the movie. Fleury attempts to look at all possible sides, while still continuing to play a patriotic American. In the meeting with Prince Bin Khaled, where he tries to convince his Majesty to let the team be more involved in the investigation, Fleury takes a diplomatic approach.

Fleury (to Prince Bin Khaled): -Let us help you. America's not perfect, not at all, I'll be the first to say that. But we are good at this, allow us to help your men.

What this tells the audience is that Fleury contends America's imperfections, however, towards the conclusion of the movie, the audience realizes that they would have not been able to kill Hamza had it not been for the team. As Fleury is the personification of America this tells audiences that American presence is needed in Saudi Arabia in order to bring down terrorism. Ultimately, what is signified is that the Middle East, cannot function as a crime solving entity without the aid of an American hero like Fleury.

5.1.3 Character Analysis: Colonel Faris Al Ghazi

In some ways Colonel Faris can be viewed as Fleury's counterpart. Faris is a Saudi State Police officer, who is significantly seen wearing his uniform throughout the movie, which establishes his own patriotism towards his country. Much like Fleury, Faris also portrayed to be moral compass. The audience is introduced to Faris during the violent interrogation of Sergeant Haytham. In the scene, it is evident that the Colonel is not comfortable with these tactics and quickly tries to stop the situation, showing his morality and humanity. In the middle of the film, we learn that Faris is also a family man, with 3 children and a wife. The audience sees Faris playing and spending time with his children, as well as him praying with his family.

Over the course of the film, much like Fleury, Faris does not experience any significant changes to his personality. It is apparent throughout the movie that Faris is a stickler for rules and protocol, he refuses to break them under any circumstances. This proves not only his dedication to his job but also to his country.

Faris, however, is somewhat Americanized, which ultimately leads the team to connect with him. After picking up the team from airport, Faris is asked if he has even been to the United States and Faris answers:

Faris (to the team): -Yes, I have been there once. I spent four days in Quantico. I also saw Michael Jordan play for the Washington Wizards.

(The Kingdom)

Quantico can be viewed as a signifier; it is of course, where the FBI training centre and headquarters are, as well as one of the largest U.S. Marine Corps bases. Quantico, thus, represents the hub or nucleus of American defense and law enforcement. And another signifier, Michael Jordan, is arguably one of the greatest basketball players, basketball being a very much American sport. Quantico and Michael Jordan both are very vital signifieds of American culture and pride. The fact that Faris has been to the States and has experience these two cultural symbols are significant of his Americanization. The audience experiences Faris in a different way, as he is perhaps closer to them just by his awareness of the two cultural phenomenons.

The following will analyze another part of the narrative structure according to Chatman's premise. The scenes under analysis can be considered 'events', which are "actions or happenings" that are "both changes of state" [Chatman, 1978]. The events discussed here are element of the narrative structure of the film as they can also be representative of a signified. The happenings below infer to the reader certain things about the story what is being told.

5.1.4 Scene Analysis: Faris and Fleury in the Car

Midway through the movie, Fleury and Faris go to question an ex-terrorist, after having gotten some freedom from the Prince to conduct an investigation. While on their way, they engage in conversation that ultimately brings them closer together. The scene is made up of exaggerated close-up shots of the faces from behind and the lighting is very low compared to the outside. As discussed in the methodology chapter, images can be “charged by connotation procedures available to cinema” and camera angles as well as lighting elements of this [Bignell, 1997]. The signification of these close-up shots of Faris and Fleury, represent the intimate moment that is occurring. The shot also signifies the importance of what the characters are saying. And as it is shot from behind it attempts to bring the audience into the conversation, as it is a point-of-view shot. Furthermore, both Fleury and Faris are shot on the same level, such an images results in the signified or concept that they are equals and that there is no power struggle between them.



Fleury: -So why did you get into this Al Ghazi?

Faris: -Into what?

Fleury: -Being a cop, why did you get into being a cop? With all this violence and chaos it seems so crazy.

Faris: -It's because of the green beast.

Fleury: -The what?

Faris: -The green beast

Fleury: -What the hell is a green beast?

Faris: -It's a TV show, when I was a kid. A man who turns green when he is very angry...

Fleury: -Oh yeah yeah, The Hulk.

Faris: -Yeah, you he was just killing bad people because they did wrong.

Fleury: -Yeah, don't get me angry you wouldn't like me when I'm angry

Faris: -You also know Steve Austin?

Fleury: -Yeah, six million dollar man, now that's my shit.

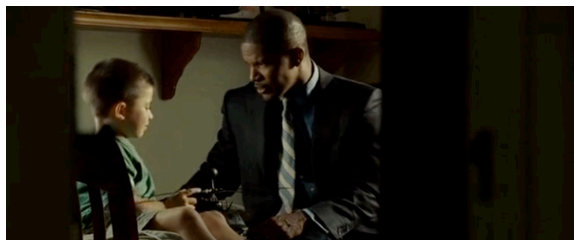
(The Kingdom)

In this conversation we learn why Faris became a police officer and the reason given is very telling of the influence American culture has on the film characters. The Hulk is a very popular American superhero comic, which was turned into a television series in the States. The Hulk turns into a green supernatural strong creature that fights 'the bad guys'. The Six Million Dollar Man, who has bionic implants and works as an intelligence agent, is another American superhero pop culture icon. These American superheroes, the signifiers, were what inspired or motivated Faris to go in to law enforcement. Ultimately, what is signified is it the idea that American culture is at the root of Faris's decision to be a policeman. The concept implied to the audience is that had it not be for America and its influential television series Faris would not have pursued his vocation.

On a large scale, the audience comes to believe that Faris, a Saudi national, would not have been the moral, law abiding officer he turned out to be without the help of America. Furthermore, this solidifies American cultural superiority over Saudi Arabia, and perhaps even the Middle East as a whole. Such a concept reinforces the theory of Orientalism, as it is "seen in relation to the Western dominations of the Orient through colonialism and imperialism as well as neo-imperialism" [Kennedy, 2000]. The influence of American pop culture can often be cited as a form of neo-imperialism.

5.1.5 Scene Analysis: Fleury with Children

Children play a rather important role in this movie, and appear on several occasions. At the start of the movie Fleury visits Francis's son, the fellow agent and friend who died in the bombings. And towards the end of the film, Fleury also visits Colonel Faris's son, as Faris dies in the line of fire when the team kills Hamza. In the scene with Francis's son, the shots are mainly close-ups and/or medium close-ups of their face and upper bodies. Such camera angles emit certain signs that generate meaning to the viewer [Bignell, 1997]. Thus, such shots are again telling the audience that it is an intimate moment that they are observing. Similarly, the scene with Faris's son is also comprised of the same types of shots, indicating and emoting the same thing to the audience.



(The Kingdom)

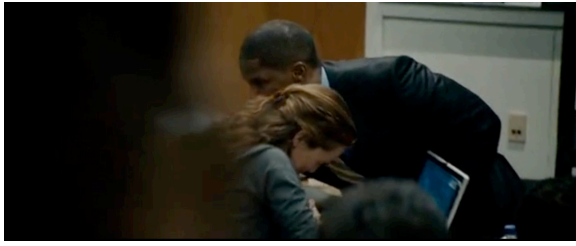
These two scenes are very much linked together and perhaps pivotal to one of the messages in the film. The scenes demonstrate to the audience that there is a sense of equality between the two children and what they have lost. In the second scene, Faris's son asks Fleury if he knew his father, Fleury responds by saying that his father was his friend and that he was a very brave man. Indicating that just as agent Francis was his friend, Faris had also come to be his friend. The boys are dressed differently; Francis's son in Western clothing and Faris's son in the traditional Middle Eastern Jellabiya, indicating the two different worlds he is encountering. However, this contrast in clothing does not take away from what is signified, which is ultimately that they are from different

worlds but the emotion of loss is a commonality amongst everyone. Furthermore, in the scene prior to that conversation, Fleury shakes hands with family members at the wake as they are praying and reading the Koran. What is signified to the audience is not only a sense of equality but also a sense of respect for Faris and the Islamic loss rituals. This scene creates an understanding that the two people who died and the people they left behind and not different irrespective of their spiritual or religious beliefs.

5.1.6 Scene Analysis: 'Kill Them All'

Two other pivotal scenes that come together at the end of the film are when what is whispered is revealed to the audience. During a team briefing at the FBI at the start of the movie, Fleury reveals that agent Francis has passed on and later whispers something in agent Mayes's ear to comfort her. Additionally, while Hamza, the madman behind the bombing, is shot and dying in the presence of his family he whispers something to his grandson in order to calm him. In both instances what is said in the moment is not revealed to the audience. It is not until the conclusion of the film, we find out simultaneously what was said. The audience learns that both Fleury and Hamza say the same thing: "we're going to kill them all".

The shots are in a sense taken from distance but seem to close in on the faces of the subjects. Furthermore, in both cases the scene is capture almost as if from behind something, a person or a wall. The honing in on the characters in the frame as well as the shooting from behind something, signifies that it is an important conversation but also that it is a private one that is to be shared between the two characters at hand.



(The Kingdom)

During the conclusion of the film, the understanding that the audience has arrived to in the pervious scene, where we feel as sense of likeness between the two regions, is lost. The connotation behind what is said in this scene speaks volumes, in that the conflict/difference between the two sides is never ending. In Fleury's case, where referring to "them" it is not specified on whether he is talking about the Islamic Fundamentalists or the region as a whole. On the other side, even during Abu Hamza's last breath he preaches violence against the unspecified West. Ultimately, this leads the audience to believe that nothing has changed or been resolved and in some respects completely negates all the good represented in the film by Faris and other characters. On a large scale, what is signified here is that no matter what happens, the people from both sides remain narrow-minded.

In the following, there will be a focus on the representation of two groups the Islamic Fundamentalists and moderate Muslims. This can also be considered a part of Chatman's narrative structure as representations of these groups involve main characters. Furthermore, groups can also carry collective traits that are significant to the analysis.

5.1.7 The Islamic Fundamentalists

In the film *The Kingdom*, there appears to be a group of Islamic Fundamentalists who believe in violence, however, the name of the group is not specified. At the face of this group is Abu Hamza, portray as the leader and preacher to his followers.



(*The Kingdom*)

As mentioned previously, clothing in terms of semiotics is used in film “in order to communicate particular messages” [Bignell, 1997]. Throughout most of the film, Hamza has his face covered, so as not to reveal his identity. He is wearing typical Middle Eastern clothing, Jellabiya and a common scarf that is often used as a headdress in Saudi Arabia. The fact that Hamza face is covered up, leads the viewer to focus on the area of his eyes. The eyes often represent an intense and revealing part of the face. Furthermore, hiding the rest of his face can lead to a sense of fear, as the audience might feel afraid of what is unknown, thus further increasing their distrust of the Islamic Fundamentalism.

Several characters in the film have painted rather dark descriptions of Abu Hamza. In an FBI briefing, Fleury described him as a “Bin Laden wannabe”, which indicates that Hamza has made maybe efforts to be portrayed as this terrorist. Bin Laden is considered a signifier in this case, he is perhaps one of the most ruthless killers of this time, and he is the most public face of Al-Qaeda, an

extremely feared terrorist organization. Thus, for Hamza to be depicted as a “Bin Laden wannabe”, leads the audience to the signified that he is just as mad and evil, if not worse. In another instance, while questioning an ex-Islamic Fundamentalist, Hamza is described as “a man who can plan the mass murder of women and children then go home and sleep soundly”. The portrayal leads to the connotation that Hamza feels no guilt after having killed many innocent people. This leads the audience to believe that not only is Hamza a ruthless man but also a heartless man.

The character of Abu Hamza does not speak very often throughout the film; he plays a more mysterious role, again leading the audience to fear him further. However, after the bombings, Hamza makes a speech to his followers, which is then recorded and put on the Internet. Hamza’s rhetoric is very much linked to religion; in his statement he believes that the attack on the compound was a “great Jihad” and that “God willing” they will get rid of all the “infidels”. The term Jihad in the Islamic faith is general and not limited to a fight against evil; the term can also be used to refer to a fight against temptation for example. In this context, the connotation behind what Hamza says, suggests that those who died in the bombings were evil and infidels or non-believers. This leads the audience to abhor Hamza, as many of the victims were children. Ultimately, Hamza’s character is built to portray the definitive ‘bad guy’, or one can even go so far to say the audience might view him as Satan himself.

This supports Said’s theory and idea of what he calls *Islamic Orientalism*. He cites this in a sense that there is “a sharpened sense of difference between Orient and Occident as reflected in Islam” [Said, 1978]. Abu Hamza’s use of terms such as Jihad in a vindictive manner reinforces this sense of distinction through the perspective of the Islamic faith.

Furthermore, one could consider Abu Hamza himself to be a sign or symbol that generates meaning. Saussure notes that a concept “acquires its meaning through its relations to other signs” [Gillespie, 2006]. Thus, meaning is derived from difference or opposition of varying signifiers. If Fleury and Faris

signify the heroes in the film, the Abu Hamza would be equated as the villain due to the characters distinguishable traits.

In terms of Hamza's followers or other Islamic Fundamentalists depicted in the film, they are very much 'typical' images.



(The Kingdom)

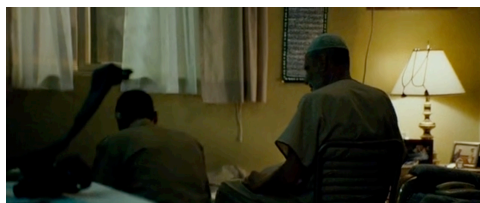
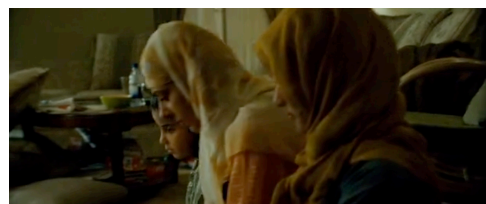
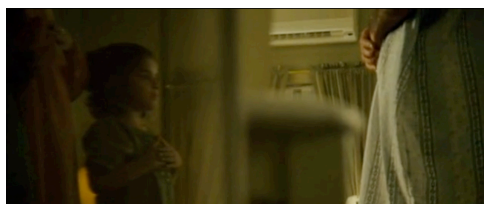
As seen from the above images, the Fundamentalists are dressed in black ski masks and headscarves. This reiterates the importance of clothing in analysis, as they are codes that provide 'social meanings' [Bignell, 1997]. Often masking their faces, giving the connotation that they must be feared and that they are not trustworthy. In another scenes while Abu Hamza is preaching, as seen in the third picture, some of the followers are dressed in normal Jellabiyas and are not covering their faces. The cameraman, on the other hand, is again wearing a headdress and is growing a long beard, which is often depicted as something Islamic Extremists do. This tells a message to the audience that terrorists can have the 'mainstream' stereotypical image or look like 'ordinary' Arab men.

Another important point to mention is what the Fundamentalists say and much like Hamza they often utter something religious. For example, as the

suicide bomber is about to detonate the bomb, he says “there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger”. The implication is of course that the bomb is a representation of the Islamic religion. Furthermore, what is signified to the audience is that the Islam or Allah supports this type of violence. Leading the audience to further feelings of distain towards the religion.

5.1.8 Moderate Muslims

In contrast to the Extremists represented in *The Kingdom*, there is also what one would deem ‘ordinary’ Muslims. In a montage midway through the film, Colonel Faris and Sergeant Haytham are seen praying. The clips depict Faris and his family praying and kneeling before Allah. Faris and his son are dressed in Jellabiyas and his wife and two daughters are also dressed in traditional prayer clothing, covering their heads with a scarf. Haytham is also seen praying with his old and very sick father, who is using a chair as he is not able to kneel, which is common for many who are not able to perform their prayers standing up.



(The Kingdom)

The shots in this montage are very tight and comprised of close-ups as well as, shots from behind. The signification of these camera angles leads the audience to believe that these are very personal moments being captured. Through these images the audience perceives that Faris, who as mention before is a patriotic

and loyal officer of the law, is praying with his family, which we can assume possess the same traits.

According to Peirce's ideas on semiotics, one type of sign is a 'symbol', which can "signify on the bases of convention" [Berger, 2000]. Children are often a symbol of innocence and purity; they are untainted by evil and political conflict. Thus, what is signified here is the association of prayer with innocence and purity. Furthermore, Haytham is seen helping his old and weak father to the bathroom in order to perform an 'ablution' (which is a cleansing ritual using water done before Islamic prayer). The fact that Haytham is helping and taking care of his old father makes the audience assume that the Sergeant is a compassionate person, which is then linked with the Islamic act of prayer. On a larger scale, the connotation derived from these scenes about the Islamic faith and Muslims is one opposing to that of the Extremists. These images connect innocence, family and compassion with that of the faith.

In another instance, in the midst of looking over the site of the bombings, agent Mayes and Leavitt point out a group of officers praying in the field.



(The Kingdom)

The officers or soldiers are dressed in what appears to be standard issue army camouflage uniforms. These uniforms signify more than just being a member of the army. They signify patriotism, honor, loyalty, trustworthiness and a sense of protection. The fact that the officers or soldiers are praying together in unison

also signifies a feeling of togetherness and unity. All these concepts collectively become linked again to the perception of the Islamic faith and how Muslims conduct themselves. The audience subconsciously receives a message that these officers or soldiers and what they stand for represent Islam.

Another noteworthy happening in the film occurs during the conclusion. Sergeant Haytham hands Fleury a Misbaha (Islamic rosary) before boarding the plane back to the States. The signifier Misbaha consists of 33 beads in the Islamic faith and is used as a way of praising God; it can also be hung in car mirrors and in homes.



(The Kingdom)

Haytham gives Fleury the rosary and tells him that it's "to keep away your [his] worries", and Fleury accept it with a "thank you". The Misbaha signifies more than just beads on a string it is a representation of Islam. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, Fleury is the personification of the States and a true American superhero. Thus, by having Fleury accept the Rosary, the connotation behind this is perhaps that America is accepting the Islam faith.

5.1.9 The Rhetoric

The rhetoric used in *The Kingdom*, is another vital part of the analysis of the films. The following are some of the various remarks made by the American team:

(To Fleury on the phone)

Francis: -They blew up a Goddamn softball game, kids and everything

(On the plane to Saudi Arabia)

Leavitt: -What's it like there over on the ground?

Sykes: -It's a bit like Mars

(Upon entering the recreation centre where they are sleeping)

Mayes: -They don't have fire codes here Sykes. You're in the jungle now baby, look sharp.

(While looking at a video of the bombing)

Sykes: -They so love to flaunt their work.

[The Kingdom]

One of the primary premises of the Orientalist theory is of course the very distinction between the West 'us' and the East 'them' [Said, 1978]. This idea is reiterated through the rhetoric utilized, with the use of the words *they* and *their* distances the team from the country and the people that live in it. Fleury and his team do not specify whom they are talking about and so the audience can assume that *they* refers to Saudi Arabians. When agent Sykes describes Saudi as *Mars*, there is a large signification at hand. *Mars* does not only suggest a planet in space, the implication here is that Saudi is an alien country, not just foreign. Furthermore, Sykes's connotation leads the audience to believe that Saudi Arabia is unlivable, that it is so far from any frame of reference the team might have in

order to understand what it is like there. In another instance, Mayes tells the team that there are 'no fire codes' in Riyadh, which implies that not only is it unsafe but that the country is not developed enough to have fire codes. In addition, she also describes Saudi as a *jungle*, the jungle being a somewhat dangerous place that is mysterious and strange. Furthermore, one of the main connotations that can be deduced from this depiction is that it is an extremely primitive place with little or not human life. Such a description leads the audience to believe that Saudi Arabia is dangerous and primitive country, which might perhaps guide their distain towards it.

5.1.10 Myths

The interpretations derived from the above analysis, lead the audience to the belief or assumption of certain myths about the Middle East. In the film *The Kingdom*, the myths are not very extensive but they are however rather common. Barthes describes myth as "the repetition of the concept through different form" and the "insistence of a kind of behavior, which reveals its intentions" [Barthes, 1993]. The following will identify and support some of the myths included in the film.

One of the main myths that can be deduced after deeper analysis is the fact that *the Middle East needs America*. The best example of this is the idea that the FBI team solves the investigations into the bombing with a little help from the Saudi police. The FBI team insists that the police need their help in the case, despite the persistence from the Saudi Arabian authorities that they prefer to handle the situation themselves, as it is considered a matter of the state. The most critical parts of the investigation are discovered by the team and the instruction of the Saudi police. Agent Sykes is the one that is able to understand how the bomb is made and is responsible for the most proper way of digging the bomb site. Furthermore, the kidnapped agent is found, ultimately leading them to

Abu Hamza, which signifies that had it not been for American involvement the capture and shooting of the perpetrator would not have occurred. This would guide the audience to assume that the Saudi authorities need the FBI team in spite of their rejection of the help. This gives rise to the myth that *the Middle East needs America*.

Another important myth that can be inferred from the analysis is this idea that *Fundamentalists are strange characters with no previous history*. The Fundamentalists and especially Abu Hamza are painted with mysteriousness. The characters do not come from anything they just appear to be otherworldly. The film portrays them with no previous context and no history for the audience to be able to reference. They are repeatedly seen to be so separate and different from the 'ordinary'. Abu Hamza, as previously mention, often appears to have no face just eyes which instills alarm into the audience because what they perceive is so unknown. Though Fundamentalist beliefs and actions are unacceptable it would perhaps be relevant for the audience to be provided with a context in order to have a clearer picture and comprehension of the events in the film.

Finally, a myth that is perhaps linked to the one mentioned above is the notion that *Fundamentalists spend all their time working on weapons and plotting*. While this may or may not be true it is nonetheless a myth that can be derived from the analysis. From the myth that they have no background, the audience can be led to this assumption also. The Fundamentalists illustrated to the audience are seen praising the attacks and building bombs. They are not portrayed as doing anything else or conducting any other conversations.

5.1.11 Concluding Remarks

There are perhaps many more aspects of the movie that can be analyzed. However, for the purposes of this thesis the pervious were the most vital aspects. Ultimately, the film The Kingdom sends the audience mixed messages about Saudi Arabia, Islam and Muslims. The movie's portrayals contain both positive and negatives images for the audience. However, what is interesting to note is the two main characters, Fleury and Faris, can be consider counterparts in the film. They both possess very much the same beliefs and values and they both represent heroes, yet they are of different backgrounds as well as different faiths. Furthermore, representations of Islam are wide-ranging and perhaps opposing providing an interesting perspective to the audience

Part 2

Analysis of “Al-Akhar” (‘The Other’)

5.2.1 Film Synopsis

The film begins with when Adam, who is studying the phenomenon of religious terrorism at UCLA, and his Algerian friend Boujdad visit Edward Said in New York. They talk about how big things like Beethoven’s music and computers are owned by humanity as a whole and not by the people who claim to have invented them. The boys decide to go back to their respective countries of Egypt and Algerian to understand the origins of religious terrorism. While on the plane back to Egypt Adam looks at the newspaper, which reads “Dr. Essame returns to Cairo with American Delegation”. It is at the airport that Adam and Hanan first lay eyes on each other. Hanan comes from a very modest upbringing; she is a small time journalist working of a newspaper trying to get an interview with Dr. Essame. When picking Adam up at the airport his mother Margaret, an American Christian woman married to Khalil a rich businessman and close friend of Dr. Essame, tells Adam that he must go when them to Sinai to see the religious compound they are planning to build. The religious compound is being built to bring together the Islamic, Christian and Jewish faiths. Meanwhile Hanan’s mother Baheyya, tells her daughter to go visit her uncle in Sinai, who works at a resort next to where the religious compound site. Margaret and her husband Khalil are meeting with Dr. Essame and the American delegation in Sinai to try and attract potential investors. After meeting Adam, Hanan is finally able to get an interview with Dr. Essame about the project. Adam and Hanan end up falling in love and marrying in Sinai without their parents present. Upon returning to Cairo, Adam and Hanan tell their parents that they are married. However, Margret is disapproving of the marriage as she feels her son deserves someone of a higher class, but ultimately throws a lavish wedding for them at the pyramids to showoff. We also learn that Hanan has an estranged brother, Fathi,

who is part of a Fundamentalist organization and has recently return back to Cairo from Afghanistan, where he has been for 7 years. Hanan and Baheyya have had no contact with Fathi, and when he returns and visits Baheyya, she kicks him out and disowns him. Hanan writes an incriminating article about the building of the religious compound and all those involved in the project, including Khalil, Adam's father. The article infuriates Adam, he and Hanan have a huge fight and he ends up forcing himself of her. Adam returns to his parent's house, where his overly affectionate mother tries to set him up with Diana, the American Ambassadors daughter, at another lavish party. He rejects her and Margaret tells him that Extremists in Algeria killed Boujdad. Adam returns to Hanan for comfort and apologizes to her. Meanwhile, Margaret plots to separate Adam and Hanan. She meets Fathi online and makes a deal with him, she will provide him with a visa to the States if he declares the marriage illegitimate and marries Hanan off to one of his friends in the Extremist organization. We also learn that the article that Hanan wrote holds true and that Dr. Essame as well as Khalil have been stealing money from investors in the compound. Furthermore, Hanan tells Adam she is pregnant and when they go to the hospital for a check up they find out that there was a terrorist bomb. And when they learn that there is a shortage of blood, Adam and Hanan decide to donate, which angers Margaret. Fathi then kidnaps Hanan in order to carry out the plan of marrying her to his friend. Adam learns that Hanan has been taken after hacking into his mother's computer and runs to try to save her. In the mean time, Margaret calls Dr. Essame to send the police to capture Fathi and the people in the organization. After learning that the police have arrived, Fathi tries to escape with Hanan while Adam is running after them to try and save her. Fathi, Hanan and Adam are all shot and killed in the line of fire between the Extremists and police.

The following will focus on an analysis of the characters of Adam and Margaret. As mention in Part 1, characters make up the narrative structure and are a vital part of analysis in order to understand the film. According to Chatman, “character is reconstructed by the audience from evidence announced or implicated” [Chatman, 1989]. And the evidence is portrayed in the habits that collectively generate character traits.

5.2.2 Character Analysis: Adam

Adam, the main character, is a student at UCLA in California studying religious terrorism. His father is a very rich Egyptian businessman and his mother is an American Christian. Adam is very privileged, has spent a lot of time abroad, both studying and vacationing. He can be considered a ladies man, as he has had many relationships with rich foreign women. And yet, he falls for and marries Hanan, who is from the working class. Adam’s character is very complex; he is very much tied to his rich, somewhat foreign upbringing but feels a bond with his Egyptian roots. Throughout the film, Adam is torn between the two worlds.

It would be incorrect to classify Adam as the hero in the film, nor could one describe him as a representation of the typical Egyptian man, as he is from the elite class in Egypt. Adam is somewhat of a hybrid of the two cultures, with Margaret pulling to his American roots and Hanan pulling him towards his Egyptian roots.

In terms of Adam’s traits, the audience might not see him as the good guy throughout the film. After a heated fight with Hanan about the article, Adam rapes her and leaves her to return to his parent’s house. Hanan does forgive Adam for what he did and takes him back. However, the audience’s perception of Adam is already tainted. Furthermore, Adam’s religious beliefs or faith is not

very evident to the audience; throughout the film it is unclear what Adam's values are.

Towards the end of the film, however, it does become evident that Adam pledges his allegiance to Egypt. After Margaret scolds Adam for giving blood at the hospital, he proves to the audience that he is patriotic. Chatman recognizes that there is a possibility that traits can change of the course of the film or any other medium [Chatman, 1989]. He emphasizes the idea that character traits may “unfold, that is, emerge earlier or later in the course of the story” or they may “disappear and be replaced by another” [Chatman, 1989]. And this is very much applicable to Adam character.

Adam (to Margaret): -I've chosen to be Egyptian and I will live and be buried on Egyptian soil.

(Al-Akhar-“The Other”)

By choosing Hanan over Margaret in a sense, Adam is ultimately choosing to be an Egyptian. Furthermore, the very fact that he says he will be buried in Egypt signifies a sense of eternal love for the country. The connotation behind this is that even in death Adam will stay faithful to Egypt.

5.2.3 Character Analysis: Margaret

Margaret, another pivotal character in the film, is an American, who is unhappily married to wealthy Egyptian man. Margaret is very possessive and loving towards her son, Adam. The audience is first introduced to her at the airport while picking up her son. It is evident from her initial interactions with her son that she may possess some incestuous feelings towards him. Later we

learn that she was abused by her father and tells her son the he must be the one to make up for all the love that she was denied when she was young. Margaret's complex and twisted character, leads the audience to see her as devious person but which they cannot help be feel sorry for.

To the audience Margaret might be considered as the personification of American in the film. Margaret can be categorized as a 'symbol' according to Peirce's definition as the relationship is somewhat arbitrary [Gillespie, 2006]. Throughout the movie, she professes her distain towards Egypt and its population. In addition, on several occasions she also claims that America is far more superior on all accounts. She believes that Hanan is not good enough for Adam because he is an American and he can do better than an Egyptian. She believes that the Egyptian civilization is poor and deprived and that Hanan is among the destitute.

Margaret (to Adam): -She [Hanan] is like her people, deprived and used for thousands of years. No one has not ruined them. From the time of the Hyksos, to the Romans, the English and the French and now the Americans.

(Al-Akhar-'The Other')

This illustrates that Margaret believes Egyptians are worthless and weak, and that one should not bother aiding them. Thus, this emphasizes her arrogance and belief that American is more advanced than Egypt. In this sense she epitomizes Said's idea on the theory of Orientalism as "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" [Said, 1978].

Another noteworthy point about Margaret's character is the stressing of the fact that she is a Christian. On several occasions when she is seen in her office there often appears crucifix behind her or a picture of a Saint or Christ. These, according again to Peirce's types of signs, are 'icons' [Berger, 2000]. These images represent and are a signification of the Christian faith. By associating

Margaret's devious character with these symbols the audience is perhaps lead to believe that there is a link between the so-called 'bad buy' and the religion.

The next section will highlight a few of the critical scenes in the film that generated meaning. Chatman claims that the events in a story may appear seemingly unrelated however they are connected on some large principle that is revealed later [Chatman, 1978]. Thus, the events discussed in the following may seem disconnected but they are in the end very much intertwined in the discourse of the film.

5.2.4 Scene Analysis: 'I'm your Slave'

After Hanan's article appears in the newspapers, incriminating Adam's father and his friends, they get into a huge argument. Adam claims that Hanan has ruined his family and that she should be more respectful to her husband. She tells him that he needs to let her have her own opinions in their public life, otherwise she will become just like an object that he can keep when he needs and throw away when he wants. Adam storms out to calm himself, he returns to the apartment later looking for Hanan. Upon his arrival he finds her dressed in a Niqab, traditionally a type of veil that covers the whole face except the eyes. The Hijab is the most common type of veil that some women in the Islam faith wear and it means covering the whole body and hair. There are however, women who choose to wear the Niqab, they are considered more conservative and religious than most. It does not necessarily mean that women who dress in the Niqab are oppressed; it is often considered a personal choice.

In the scene, Hanan tells him "are you happy now? I'm a slave at your disposal". When Adam sees Hanan wearing the Niqab he is infuriated and tells

her “I’ll show you what a real slave is like”. Adam pulls off the headdress and rapes Hanan.



(Al-Akhar-‘The Other’)

According to Christian Metz’s idea on codes in film, he believes that elements such as lighting, camera positions, etc. are signs specific to cinema as they are tools used to create meaning for the viewer [Bignell, 1997]. In this particular scene the lighting and camera angles produce certain connotations. Hanan enters the scene from a distance, like a dark shadow creeping up on Adam. This intensifies the moment, as the audience is unaware of who the figure approaching is, leading them to a sense of fear. The shot of Hanan in the Niqab is a tight close-up, her whole face is covered and only her eyes can be seen. The closing in on her face, or lack there of, guides the audience to think that this is a powerful scene. By having Hanan’s face covered, again ignites fear in the audience, as we often fear what is unknown and strange. After Adam has finished forcing himself on her, the audience sees Hanan destitute on the floor while Adam is standing putting his clothes on. The shot shows Adam as if he is towering over her, suggesting that he is in the power position.

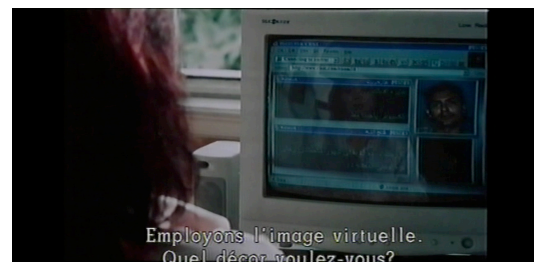
The scene is significant as it can be representative of many things, which Hanan and the Niqab stand for. The Niqab does signify Islam, a very strict part of how some interpret Islam, but it does not necessarily suggest a violent sect. Hanan believes by wearing the Niqab it shows Adam that she is his servant. Slave, has many connotations; it implies that someone is a subordinate, victim, hostage or inferior. Thus, the Niqab, a symbol of a sect of Islam, leads the audience to associate the religion with being lesser than and insignificant.

Furthermore, the concept of rape can also hold many signifieds, which can effect the audience's perceptions. Rape is a violent sexual assault of someone without his or her consent, which according to Saussure would be the second element of a sign, consider the 'concept' [Hall, 1997]. The signifier of sexual assault or rape carries with it various connotations such as attack or offence. Adam is clearly angered by the Niqab that Hanan is wearing, which leads him to force himself on her. This can perhaps represent a violation and assault on Islam itself, as the Niqab is a symbol of the faith. Due to all the associations that related to rape, the audience might perceive some sort of aggression towards the Muslim religion.

This scene could be considered very much representative of the Orientalist theory. Hanan is a portrayal of the Orient and more specifically the Islamic Orient. While Adam, at this point of the film remains somewhat confused as to his allegiance to Egypt. The act of rape and the representation of woman can be linked to Said's ideas. He claims that Orientalism is 'male' and that women "express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing" [Said, 1978]. Ultimately, there is an association between the Orient and 'sex' as well as the need for dominance, thus exemplifying this scene.

5.2.5 Scene Analysis: Virtual Meeting

In an attempt to try and break Hanan and Adam up, Margaret contacts Fathi to devise a plan. Margaret and Fathi converse in a chat room online and decide to meet in a virtual Paris. Through the virtual world of the computer they encounter each other in a café on the Eiffel Tower.



(Al-Akhar-‘The Other’)

At the café Margaret negotiates separating Adam and Hanan with Fathi in exchange for a visa to the United States. Fathi expresses his distain for the Western world.

Margaret: -Your sister Hanan, I want to separate her from Adam. Adam is my only son and I am not prepared to share him with anyone.

Fathi: -Ok, we'll separate them.

Margaret: -How? They are married.

Fathi: -I know. She has become a slut like all Parisian women. As soon as I become a leader, I'll take over Paris and purify it of its women.

Margaret: -Paris wouldn't be Paris without its women.

(Al-Akhar- 'The Other')

This scene starts off with behind point of view shots, which focus the audience in on the computer and the virtual world that the characters are about to enter into. The computer is very representative of the modern, and it is important to note that both characters are using it as an instrument to communicate, thus perhaps putting them on a similar level. In the meeting at the café, Fathi is formally dressed in a suit and red bowtie. Margaret is also wearing a red and black dress. The colour red that they are both wearing gives the connotation of angry and rage they are projecting towards the situation. Fathi for not being able to get a visa and the distaste he feels towards Parisian women. Margaret's angry spurs from her hatred of Hanan a symbol of the Egypt and its people.

The conversation that occurs between Fathi and Margaret is a representation of their beliefs. As Fathi sits talking to Margaret, over her shoulder he has a full view of three women, mostly likely his perception of Western women. The fact that they are seated on Margaret's side and in close proximity to her, the result is a sense that these three women and Margaret are cut from the same cloth. They are representations of the Western world, being either America or Europe. Fathi uses the word 'slut' to describe these women, and that he would like to purify the country of them. The word 'slut' has many connotations, it is often meant to refer to prostitutes, which can be a sign of sinfulness, adultery and dirtiness in some cases. Ultimately, these women being agents of the West, is how Fathi sees the Western world as impure and contaminated, for which he believes he needs to be cleansed.

Furthermore, another important point to note about this scene is the mere fact that Margaret is engaging with Fathi. Fathi can be considered as a

symbol of evil and an enemy. By negotiating a visa to America in exchange for getting back her son, Margaret is in a sense betraying her country, a country that despises Fundamentalists. Subsequently this signifies to the audience that Margaret, who represents America, is striking deals with the enemy.

5.2.6 Scene Analysis: Giving Blood

After a bomb detonates in Cairo, while Hanan and Adam are checking on her pregnancy, they both decide to give blood, as there is a shortage. Margaret is angry after she learns of this and decides to go to Baheyya's apartment to confront Adam in front of Hanan and her family.



(Al-Akhar-‘The Other’)

Margaret: -You donated? You donated blood? How could you give them blood? What business is it of yours? They're 64 million; they can deal with their own problems. They killed the tourists they can pay for it. You're an American.

Adam: -My father is Egyptian and I'm an Egyptian.

(Al-Akhar-‘The Other’)

During the vital part of the conversation when Margaret scolds Adam for giving blood, the shots comprised of medium close-ups. The close-up shots of Margaret's face emphasizes her angry and leads the audience focus in on the emotions she's feeling.

The most important part of this scene is the concept of blood and what it is representative of to Margaret and Adam. One of the main connotations behind blood is the idea of identity. Blood to the audience might be a symbol of more than just a red liquid that runs through our bodies. Genetic make up is a large part of what blood can mean for many. Blood can also correspond to family and fellow countrymen. In the scene Margaret emphasize the fact that he is American and that he should not be giving his blood to Egyptians. This implies that according to her Adam's blood is superior to that of Egyptians. Adam's actions, on a large scale suggest to the audience that he has chosen to be an Egyptian as his identity, his blood.

The idea of the superiority of American blood over Egyptian blood is indicated in the Orientalist theory. There is a suggestion that Orientals are "viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism" [Said, 1978]. In other words, there is a distinction between the two races and a hierarchy in terms of genetic make-up.

5.2.7 The Islamic Fundamentalists

Islamic fundamentalism is fairly prominent in the film *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'). The group portrayed in the film does not have a specific name; they do however refer to themselves at the brotherhood. From the audience's point of view the spearhead of the group, or the character that is most leading in the film

is Fathi. His character has been absent from Hanan and Baheyya's life for seven, having spent that time in Afghanistan for training.



(Al-Akhar- 'The Other')

In accordance to semiotics, clothes function like language, the clothes themselves are signifiers and the particular kinds of clothes convey certain concepts [Hall, 1997]. In terms of Fathi's appearance, it differs throughout the movie; he is seen dressed in a shirt, jeans and sunglasses or in a traditional Jellabiya. The fact that Fathi does not solely dress in Middle Eastern clothing shows the audience that he may appear to be 'normal' and can function undetected in everyday society.

As previously mentioned, Fathi is very devious; he kidnaps his sister in an effort to forcefully marry off to get a visa to the States. Betrayal of his own sister, leads the audience to believe that he is willing to do anything, including violence, to achieve his goals. After his return to Egypt, Fathi visits his mother reproaching her for letting Hanan marry an 'infidel'. He believes that because Adam's mother is a Christian that the marriage is illegitimate and that Hanan has sinned. This illustrates to the audience that Fathi is not tolerant of other faiths and that he is an Extremist. Ultimately, this leads Baheyya to disown him after the argument gets heated and he hits his mother. Fathi's mother and sister refuse to have anything to do with him, proving to the audience his highly fundamentalist ways.

Fathi's 'brothers' appear on a few occasions, but do not engage in conversation, with the exception of Fathi's friend who was set to marry Hanan.



(Al-Akhar-‘The Other’)

Fathi along with his 'brothers' are seen praying together wearing Jellabiyas and headdresses. In another scene, while Fathi and his friend are talking about Hanan's article, the brothers are perceived to be cleaning their guns. What these scenes illustrate to the audience is that they are a tight knit group, who are disciplined in their prayers. Furthermore, guns signify bloodshed; they are the instruments with which people use to commit violent acts. And by cleaning their guns it not only emphasizes their belief in violence as a way of making a point but also that they strictly maintain this point of view. Such representations support Said's ideas on Islamic Orientalism, in a sense that Islam is considered "virulently dangerous" [Said, 1978].

Moreover, the only time the brothers are seen using religious rhetoric is during the scene where they are praying. Fathi is seen ending the praying by saying "Allahu Akbar" ("God is the Greatest"). These words are very often used in the Islamic faith and also initiate a call to prayer. The significance of these words and the people using them in the film, leads the audience to make associations between the religious utterance and the brotherhood.

5.2.8 Moderate Muslims

The majority of the film Al-Akhar ('The Other') portrays an array of Egyptians from different socio-economic groups. The elite class, which includes Khalil and Dr. Essame, as well as working class Egyptians like Hanan's family. The characters are somewhat ordinary in a sense, with their own character flaws. However, in terms of representations of Muslims, other than Fathi of course, there are very little.

The religious compound that is talked about throughout the film is perhaps of significance. Margaret and Khalil take a few investors to visit the intended building site. The architect involved in the project imagines what the compound might look like.



(Al-Akhar-'The Other')

This image portrays a Synagogue, Church and Mosque in a close-knit space. It is a representation of a dream of unity, tolerance and understanding of the three religions. However, towards the conclusion of the film the audience comes to realize that the compound is a scam for Margaret, Dr. Essame and Khalil to embezzle money from investors. This implies to the audience that a coming

together of faiths is a lie. Leading the audience to believe that such a dream will most likely never be realized.

Nonetheless, there are no further references to Islam and Muslims in the film other than Fathi and his 'brothers'. The lack of representation of 'moderate Muslims' leaves the audience with a single perspective. The audience is left with the image of Fundamentalist Islam, thus the subliminally associate it with the whole faith.

5.2.9 The Rhetoric

Dialogue is another important element of film as it often reveals certain sign and code for the audience to decipher [Bignell, 1997]. The following will highlight just a couple of the instances where the remarks made by the characters might send subconscious messages to the audience. Here is one example:

(Margaret speaks to her husband after he returns home late)

Margaret: -You should have taken a shower before you came from your prostitute

Khalil: -What prostitute? I was at a meeting.

Margaret: -No matter how rich you people get you'll remain rubbish. It's a question of origin.

(Al-Akhar – 'The Other')

As has been mention in the pervious analysis, Margaret also asks Adam how he could give *them* his blood and that *they* killed the tourist so *they* should pay for it. Although, the employment of such terms in this context are used only a couple of times in the film they are still significant. By using these remarks Margaret, the embodiment of America, is distancing herself from the whole Egyptian population which we can only assume is who she it talking about. She

states that *they* killed the tourists; she does not specify the nature of whom she is referring to, Egyptians or Extremists. Such generalized division are they very definition of Orientalism, a distinction between “the Orient” (‘them’) and “the Occident” (‘us’) [Said, 1978]. She also uses the expression *rubbish*, where again she refers to the whole population. In addition, the connotation behind this is that Egyptians are beneath her or in a sense Americans and that they are dirt or irrelevant. Furthermore, the word also suggests to the audience that they are perhaps underdeveloped, since there is an association that comes with the idea of rubbish and disorganization.

5.2.10 Myths

The following will describe a few of the myths that can be ascribed from the representations and interpretations of the film *Al-Akhar* (‘The Other’). Barthes suggests that in order to “decipher” myths one must be able to identify the concepts [Barthes, 1993]. The myths produced in this film were supported by various signifieds that generated.

One of the most supported myths deduced from the signifieds represented is the notion that *America is supreme*. There are several examples of this throughout the movie and in various scenes. One of the prime examples of this, as previously discussed is when Margaret learns of Adam giving blood, implying that his American blood is far too precious to be donated to the Egyptian population. In addition, Margaret, a representation of the United States, continuously expresses in her interactions with others that she is superior to the rest of those around her. In a conversation with Adam, Margaret states that Egyptians have been used for thousands of years and that they are now being used by America. The connotations that results from this tells the audience that Egyptians are weak and America is more powerful because it is able to use the country.

Another myth resulting from the analysis is that *Islamic women are oppressed*. This is not a running theme in the film however; one of the most vital scenes in the film suggests this to the audience. The scene mentioned previously and discussed extensively is Adam's sexual assault of Hanan. The idea that wearing the Niqab, a form a headdress used by women who are very strict in their interpretation of Islam, ultimately means that they are slaves suggesting to the audience that these women are submissive. The connotation supports the myth as the association with the religion gives way to the point of view that Islamic women are exploited.

5.2.11 Concluding Remarks

The pervious is merely a fragment of the various themes that play apart in the film but they are the most valid for this thesis. The characters in this film are extremely multifaceted and complex. Although religion plays a large part in the film 'Al-Akhar' ('The Other') and is at the core of many issues, representations of faith are not a very dominant factor. There is a lack in the representation of a more moderate Islam, thus audience subliminally associate the faith with the belief of the Fundamentalist group. It is also interesting to note the dynamics of the relationships between the characters, including Fathi and his interaction, or lack of interactions, with his family.

Part 3

Findings and Comparisons

The following section will shed light on the some important points pertaining to the two films. It will identify the implied readers of both films, which is perhaps more important to the analysis than the implied authors. Then finally there will be a comparison of some of the aspects of the two movies analyzed.

5.3.1 Implied Readers: The Kingdom vs. Al-Akhar ('The Other')

The ideas about the reader enforced by Chatman in his book 'Story and Discourse' are important to note when analyzing the narratives. Although, the real and implied authors are part of the narrative texts, the following will stress more on the readers as this thesis focuses on more perceptions and assumptions made by the audience. As stated previously the real reader and implied reader are very different concepts that in varying instances may or may not refer to the same person or peoples. Chatman emphasizes that the implied reader is 'presupposed by the narrative itself' and is ever present [Chatman, 1978]. In other words, the narrative text suggests the audience for which the film is targeted and will be understood by.

5.3.1.1 The Kingdom

Although the film is set and centers around Saudi Arabia and its people, the audience isn't necessarily of this nature. The references and ideologies used in the film are geared more towards American audiences. Reference to pop

culture icons such as The Hulk, the Six Million Dollar Man and Michael Jordan are not understood by a widespread variety of people. In the film these terms are used to draw a likeness to American society so that Faris may be understood. It includes a limited set of viewers that might be familiar with such citations. Furthermore, other cultural references include the use of Quantico, which may also not be understood by many. Although Quantico is a town in Virginia in the United States, it is often applied to the Head Quarters of the FBI and stomping ground for US Marines. In addition, the films portray Fleury as the typical American hero who displays a great deal of patriotism. Such an ideal is a very common concept that would most definitely be familiar to American audiences and perhaps even other peoples.

From the narrative text of the film and the references used, the implied reader can be constructed. The implied reader of *The Kingdom* holds an understanding of American pop culture, ones that date back as early as the 70s. The implied reader is one that is aware and educated enough about current political affairs in the Middle East. The audience viewing the film will have an understanding of the implications related to having FIB presence in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the implied reader in this instance has a small comprehension of Islam and Muslim beliefs. Ultimately, the audience created by the narrative text is one that is conscious of culture significances in both America and Saudi Arabia, however, more so pertaining to the United States.

5.3.1.2 Al-Akhar ('The Other')

The film is set in Egypt and revolves around various socio-economic structures of Egyptian society. The film's narrative is also very much geared towards religious struggles and tolerance. In order to comprehend the film to its fullest, there must be an awareness of Egyptian society and the large gap that exists between the elite and working classes. Hanan's family is of a lower socio-

economic tier while Adam's family represents the highest echelon of the pyramid. In addition, while viewing Al-Akhar ('The Other') various references are made towards the importance of family. An Egyptian family for the most part suggests the idea of the extended family not just the nuclear family structure. Family life is at the core of the Egyptian value system and knowledge of this is vital to the film's viewer.

Furthermore, it is essential for audiences to have somewhat of an understanding of Islamic culture and tradition. The reference to the Niqab is largely to be understood by those aware of the differences in female headdresses. The portrayal of the Hijab and Niqab are distinctive as they represent different levels of Islamic belief and practice.

Ultimately, the implied reader in the case of Al-Akhar ('The Other') applies to audiences with a somewhat deeper understanding of Egyptian cultural belief. The viewer needs to be educated in the political conflicts troubling Egypt, whether internal or external struggles. Thus, the implied reader perhaps refers someone with knowledge of Egyptian politics, society, and religious traditions.

5.3.2 Comparison of Characters

It is of course difficult to compare characters from different films as the characters are involved in varying storylines. However, their traits and what they are representative of can be a crucial point of comparison. With differing plots and paths the following will focus on the main characters analyzed in Parts 1 and 2 of the analysis.

Although Fleury (The Kingdom) and Margaret (Al-Akhar-'The Other') portray different character traits and experience different events in their respective films, they are very similar in one respect. Both Fleury and Margaret

are personifications of America and their actions in the films are metaphors for the country's point of view. American presence plays a large part in both the films, although this might be apparent in the Western cinema, it also appears in Arab cinema.

However, the personified America in both films is not the same, as the subjects symbolize varying attributes. Fleury's character embodies all that is moral and wise while Margaret's character represents maliciousness and deviance. Fleury's actions throughout the film are indicative of the highest levels of honorability and diplomacy. His character often attempts to be the mediator of all things and constantly views issues from various perspectives. Margaret can be considered a troublemaker and meddler with her tireless efforts to break up her son's marriage even at the cost of negotiating an American visa with an 'enemy' and betraying her birthplace. In a sense they are opposing characters and representations of America. Fleury is the superhero that lives by the national oath he took as a law enforcement officer and is willing to sacrifice his life for country, while Margaret is willing to sacrifice country by being involved with Fundamentalists for personal gain. Furthermore, Fleury's sense of camaraderie with Faris creates a sense of equality between the Arab world and the States. The balancing act of Fleury paying his condolences to his friend's son as well as Faris's son suggests that there is recognition of innocent bystanders in the tension between the two regions. This represents America's acknowledgement of the peaceful people of the Middle East.

On the other hand, Margaret has in a sense a superior attitude and feels that Egyptians are unworthy, deprived and perpetually uncivilized. Such a portrayal implies that America itself retains these visions of grandeur and belief that the Middle East is inferior. Thus, the representations of America in the two films are rather dissimilar and perhaps opposing portrayals. They are indicative of two different viewpoints of the United States, its attitudes and traits.

However, there is one aspect of the two characters that remains constant in both films. Fleury and Margaret's sense of pride towards their country of

origin is a running theme in the movies. While remaining the ever diplomat, Fleury is proud of being an American. As mentioned previously, the very fact that Fleury is an FBI agent is representative of his dedication to serve and protect his people and country. As an officer of the law he symbolizes and displays his nationalistic nature and feelings. Margaret is also extremely proud to be an American and constantly shows it. The pride that she emotes she often attempts to inflict on her son Adam. Margaret's treasuring of her and her son's American 'blood' illustrates to the audience her patriotic attitude towards her country. However, the pride that Margaret feels differs from that of Fleury's, as her feelings towards nation border on arrogance and self-righteousness. Therefore, Fleury's pride seems moderate and good-natured while Margaret's is egotistical. Again these representations illustrate two different perspectives of the American and the nation as a whole.

However, although it might seem on the surface that Fleury's love and belief in his country is pure, at the root he does share some of the same arrogance as Margaret. Fleury's character's insistence that the investigation of the bombings on the compound be conducted with the help of him and his team shows the audience that he is somewhat conceited. Although the one responsible for the attack was found and killed with the efforts of both the team and Faris's help, the persistence that the case will be better solved with Fleury's help implies it could not have been done without them. This symbolizes that his American expertise and intelligence is extremely valuable. These implications epitomize Said's premise on Orientalism, in that the West needs to "dominate", "restructure" and "have authority over the Orient" [Said, 1978]. Ultimately, with a closer look at the signifieds, it represents an American arrogance, which is somewhat similar to that of Margaret's.

The two other characters that can be a point of comparison are Faris (The Kingdom) and Adam (Al-Akhar-'The Other'). Both characters are similar in the sense that they represent the Arab world. Although at the start of the film there is some doubt as to how much kinship Adam feels towards Egypt, yet this is resolved midway through the story. Much like Margaret and Fleury, the

characters of Faris and Adam encompass different traits that can be attributed to the region. Faris's character is extremely ethical and good-natured; he represents the hero of the Arab world. Similar to Fleury, as an officer he takes his job seriously and with pride. As a representation of the Arab world he portrays it in the best light, with his virtuous qualities. On the other hand, Adam's character is not opposing to Faris but he is very much different to him. Although Adam does attempt to save Hanan towards the end of the film, he does not possess the same heroic qualities as Faris. Adam's morality is on occasion called into question in the sequence of events in the film. He also often doubts his allegiance to his Arab or Egyptian roots, often appears confused. As a main character and a representation of the Arab world, Adam suggests to the audience perhaps a little bit of a lack of patriotism in the Middle East.

Moreover, another crucial point of difference is the value system in the Middle East that is portrayed through these characters. Faris proves, as mentioned previously, is morality and this comes to light in the importance he puts on family. His character is seen spending time with his children and praying with them. This illustrates the Arab region's emphasis and importance stressed on family and spirituality. It is a representation that shows the audience that Faris, the personification of the Middle East, is family oriented and respects faith. Conversely, Adam's character seems to be stuck in a state of confusion, which leads the audience to believe that there is a lack of family values in him. Adam appears to retain a complicated relationship with his father and especially with his mother. Furthermore, unlike Faris, Adam does not have too much of a sense of value for faith or women. Adam's sexual assault of Hanan for wearing the Niqab illustrates an apparent hostility towards the faith and religious beliefs. A depiction of this sort correlates with Said's visions on 'Islamic Orientalism' as scholars have described Islam as "wretched, bare and trivial" [Said, 1978]. In this respect, Adam's character, who is somewhat of a representation of the Arab world, suggests a frustration concerning certain or specific values in the region.

However, there is a similarity in the portrayals of these characters that appears on occasion in the films. With Faris being the personification of the

region and Adam somewhat of a representation of the Middle East, they are influenced by American culture. It is evident of course the influence of America in Adam's life. As Adam's mother is from the West and as he has received his university education from ULCA in California, the impact of the culture is clear. Likewise, Faris is also linked to the American culture and is the very reason for his chosen path of law enforcement. As mentioned before, Faris's link to the Hulk and his visit to the heart of American defense, Quantico illustrates to the audience the power of American culture in the Middle East. Therefore, there is an evident appearance of American dominance in both films and that ultimately the West plays a large role in the Arab world. Again, this is indicative of Said's argument pertaining to Western dominance through neo-imperialism, which would include the influence of American cultural icons [Said, 1978].

5.3.3 Comparisons in Islamic Fundamentalists

When making comparisons in the representations of Islamic Fundamentalists/Extremists in the films *The Kingdom* and *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') the most palpable point of contention is a deeper look at the faces of this sect of Islam portrayed.

The two most prominent faces of Islam in the two movies, as previously mention, are Abu Hamza (*The Kingdom*) and Fathi (*Al-Akhar*-*'The Other'*). In terms of the portrayal of Abu Hamza, to the audience, he seems like a very distant and mysterious figure to them. This is emphasized to the audience by him having his mouth covered for more than three quarters of the way through the movie. Furthermore, Abu Hamza is not really seen in conversation about anything other than the utterance religious words, which are used in vengeance and plotting against 'the infidels'. This further instills fear into the eyes of the audience as it adds more distance and mysteriousness. Abu Hamza also mostly appears to interact with his followers, although in the beginning and near the end of the film he is seen conversing with him grandson, yet this is merely to

encourage violence. And lastly, another point of comparison lies with the type of clothing he is always portrayed to be wearing. Although clothing may seem insignificant, it does send subliminal messages to the audience. Abu Hamza is constantly seen wearing a Jellabiya and headdress the stereotypical costume Arab villains wear. All these points lead the audience to believe that Abu Hamza lives in a strange and remote world, that is completely not relatable to them.

On the other hand, Fathi's character appears to be distant and yet understandable in the same instance. Fathi is provided with somewhat of a back-story and seems to have relationships with people, even though they may be dysfunctional or damaging ones. Fathi, from the audience's comprehension, had been training in Afghanistan for seven years with no contact with his mother or sister. As mentioned previously, Hanan and her family come from a very working class background, they have struggled both economically and socially. In the movie Hanan hints that the economic situation of the population, although not an excuse, leads them to join Fundamentalist groups. This type of back-story suggests to the audience some type of reason for why some might choose to follow such groups. Even though this might not instill sympathy towards the group, it does however create more of a comprehension. Moreover, with respect to Fathi's costume, as previously discussed he is seen wearing both casual jeans and shirts clothing as well as a Jellabiya and headdress. Again this shows to the audience that Fundamentalists do not solely utilize traditional Middle Eastern clothing, which perhaps in a small sense increases his level of functionality in society. While Fathi remains isolated and vague from the minds of the audience, he is at the same time somewhat explicable.

Nonetheless, Fathi and Abu Hamza do share similar aspects that are contrastable and relevant. They both retain a sense of retaliation and evil throughout the movie. These are popular characteristics cited by Said in his theory of Orientalism. Said claims that in film Orientals are "associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty" and "lurking behind all these images is the menace of jihad" [Said, 1978]. Fathi and Abu Hamza are involved in violence

in the two films that results in loss of lives. Fathi kidnaps his sister in a devious plan to get an American visa and the outcome is detrimental as Fathi, Hanan and Adam all die in the crossfire. Abu Hamza is responsible for the death of many, when his followers detonate two bombs in a Western housing compound, many women and children are also killed. Furthermore, both Fathi and Abu Hamza share in their hatred of Americans and the United States as a whole; they voice their opinions quite often over the course of the film. Abu Hamza targets the housing compound specifically for the reason that there are many Americans residing there, he considers it justified, as they are to him 'infidels' and sinners. Fathi also shares these views, as in his virtual meeting with Margaret he voices his belief that Western women, and ultimately that the Western world is unclean and dirty, needing decontamination. In this respect Fathi and Abu Hamza partake in the same qualities and points of view.

Ultimately, the representations of the most public faces of Islamic Fundamentalism in the films are similar and yet different. Fathi seems to be somewhat closer and less mysterious than Abu Hamza, as he is given more of a background and deeper character traits. While Abu Hamza is completely detached from the audience's world, he appears so far from reality and comprehension. Such a representation of Abu Hamza supports Said's claims that Orientals are portrayed with "no individuality, no personal characteristics or experience" [Said, 1978]. And yet Abu Hamza and Fathi's goals are almost identical, in terms of their hatred towards the West and their use of violence to achieve their goals of vengeance and so-called retaliation.

In terms of the representations of the 'brothers' or followers in the Fundamentalist groups in the two films, they are very similar portrayals. In movie *The Kingdom*, a montage portraying the followers building a bomb onto a vest is shown to the audience. Similarly, the 'brothers' in *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') are seen cleaning their guns while Fathi and his friend conduct a conversation. Both images signify to the audience their potential and intentions for violence. In terms of the way that the Fundamentalists are dressed they also share parallel costume. In all the representations of the group members in both films they are

wearing Jellabiyas, often headdresses or ski masks and at times sporting long stereotypical beards. However, there might be one miniscule difference in the portrayals and that lies in the fact that the followers in *The Kingdom* are shown to be somewhat more violent. In the scene where Agent Leavitt is kidnapped, he is psychically beaten and tied up but the followers. However, in a scene in *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') the 'brothers' along with Fathi are seen praying together. Although these two pictures might seem insignificant on the larger scale of the movie, it is perhaps important to make note of as it might send some sort of subliminal message to the audience of higher propensity for violence. Ultimately, the generalized idea supports Said's claims that Arabs have a "desire for blood revenge" [Said, 1978].

5.3.4 Comparisons in Moderate Muslims

In terms of comparing the moderate Muslims represented the films it is crucial to look at the figures most portrayed in this aspect. *The Kingdom* ultimately portrays more 'ordinary' Muslims than in the movie *Al-Akhar* and this might lead the audience to certain conclusions.

In the film *The Kingdom* Faris and Haytham symbolize the characters that practice in the faith. As mentioned before, at a certain point in the movie, Faris as well as Haytham are seen praying with their families. Faris one of the heroes in the film, his wife and children are portrayed praying together. Such images instill a sense of virtuousness and give a wholesome quality to Faris. Moreover, in a similar scene Haytham is seen helping his sick father and praying with him, this again suggests the same to the audience as the images of Faris and his family. In addition, Haytham gives Fleury a Misbaha in good faith to protect him and he accepts it. Both characters are considered honorable and do-gooders, which translates onto the images of the faith. Furthermore, these representations

suggest a differentiation between the Extremist side and the moderate side of the religion.

On the other hand, in the movie Al-Akhar ('The Other') there is a lack of representation of the moderate Muslim. Although, as mentioned previously, there is a vision of unity between the three faiths Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, with the attempted construction of the religious compound, this dream is not realized. Hence suggesting that cooperation and tolerance are fantastical as there is too much treachery in people. There are of course moderate 'people' represented in the film, such as Adam, Hanan, Baheyya etc. however they do not appear to be practicing. And while this may not seem significant and may perhaps be ordinary, the lack of a clear representation of moderation leaves the audience with the sole image of Fundamentalists. This relays to the viewer in somewhat of a subliminal way that the representation of Islam is that of the Extremists and nothing other. Even though there is a separation between the Fundamentalists and the 'ordinary' citizen the image of the religion itself seems one-sided and deficient. On the contrary, there is an appearance of aversion towards the religion, as discussed before. Adam's rape of Hanan in her Niqab, a tradition in strict Islamic followers yet not necessarily part of the violent sect, suggests that there is an angry face of the religion.

Ultimately, the representations of moderate Muslims in two films are immensely dissimilar. The representations are not so much different they are in stark contrast to each other. In the film The Kingdom, the impression left with audience about the Islamic faith appears to be softer and moral. In some instances the images allow the audience to relate to the religion and seem less outlandish to the perceiver. While in the movie Al-Akhar, there is an emptiness in that respect, viewers do not see the whole picture of the faith. Thus, there is the assumption that the aggressive Extremist sect is what is representative of the faith.

5.3.5 Comparisons in the Rhetoric

It is also perhaps important to make comparisons between some of the terminology used in the films. Again the storylines in both films are very different, however the way in which lines are phrased might have an impact on the interpretations of the films and the points of view of the characters involved. In the film *The Kingdom*, there is a lot more usages of terms such as *they* or *them* when referring to the people of Saudi Arabia without any specifications. These grand generalizations are used in *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') as well, however there are far less examples of this in the film. One similarity between the rhetoric used in both films, are the words such as *mars*, *jungle*, and *rubbish*. This echoes much of Said's arguments, which suggest that the Orient is "alien" or "uncivilized" and that Orientals were "analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved" [Said, 1978]. Although, the words might result in varying connotations, the ultimately meaning is rather similar. These terms alienate and differentiate the characters and what they personify from the Arab world.

5.3.6 Comparisons in Myths

It is perhaps also important to briefly touch upon comparisons in the myths derived from both films. There are of course many more myths that can be deduced from each of the two films, however the ones explained in Parts 1 & 2 are the most central to this thesis.

The two most comparable myths from the analysis of the films in question are the notions that *the Middle East needs America* and that *America is supreme*. Both in a sense originate from similar sentiments and resonate clearly in the two films. Signs of these myths have already been discussed extensively in the above. These myths are perpetuated throughout the films, however are portrayed in conceivably varying degrees and ways. The insinuation is that Americans are

perhaps of a higher caliber and intelligence, they must to provide assistance rather than need it.

5.3.7 Concluding Remarks

Before concluding the chapter, it is perhaps important to briefly touch on the comparisons in conclusions/endings of the films themselves. Ultimately both films end in futility, with regards to the attempts resolve some conflict. In *The Kingdom*, the film ends with the message that nothing has changed. Fleury and Abu Hamza's grandson both say they are going to *kill them all*, without any specification as to whom they are referring to and leaving the audience with the notion that violence begets violence. Similarly, in the film *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') Hanan, a representation of the Egyptian working class as well as Adam and Fathi are all killed. Ending in a similar way to *The Kingdom*, sending a message to the viewers that the clashes that have occurred are senseless and perhaps never ending. And linked to this is the death of the dream of unifying the three monotheistic faiths, again sending the message of futility.

Ultimately, it is of course complex to make comparisons between two films with varying storylines. However, there are many similarities and differences between the representations in *The Kingdom* and *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'), particularly since they originate from cinemas in different regions. There are perhaps more parallels in the representations of Fundamentalists than there are in those of the Moderate Muslims.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

The following chapter will focus on attempting to apply the theory to the findings from the analysis. The chapter will then go on to answer the research questions posed in the introduction of this thesis. The theory will namely be applied by using the four main dogmas of Orientalism, in order assert whether the characteristics are observed in the two films. There will also be a short discussion of Foucault and Gramsci apropos the Orientalist theory.

6.1 Orientalism Applied

The theory of Orientalism is one that has been around of decades and whether it can be applied to the films in question is yet to be discussed in the following. Each of the four so-called characteristics of Said's account of the Orientalist theory will be briefly reiterated and then perceived whether it relates to the two films in question.

6.1.1 Superior West and Inferior Orient

According to Said, "the absolute and systematic difference between the West which is rational, developed, humane, superior and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior" [Said, 1978]. In terms of these characteristics, there is evidence of this in both films, in certain instances lumping together both the Fundamentalists and the 'ordinary' Muslims.

In *The Kingdom*, Fleury and other representations of the West do on several occasions make these systematic differences and assert superiority. The characteristic is ascribed when the myths are stated at the latter of the analysis

chapter. This is evident in the descriptions of Saudi Arabia as being 'mars' or a 'jungle' and that there are no 'fire alarms' in the country. Such metaphors and images give the audience a feeling an abnormality and unfamiliarity to the country. And thus by doing so put the West up on a pedestal, as they do not represent the same qualities they believe the country does. Furthermore, the superiority is fostered again with the persistence of the FBI team to in a sense intervene in the investigation of the bombings. This suggests that the Saudi people and authorities are not equipped enough to solve the matter on their own accord. Moreover, that the FBI's intelligence in crime solving is far more advanced than the perceived primitive nature of the Saudi police. Further emphasizing the idea that the Middle East is not as developed as the West.

In the case of the film *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'), there is also evidence that supports this characteristic. Margaret is the main culprit that often creates this difference, as she is also a representation of the West. She is constantly reiterating how underdeveloped 'they' are, namely talking about the Egyptian population. In addition, Margaret states how unworthy of help and aid the people of Egypt are, as she believes they have been conquered by several empires over the years. There is also a repeated feeling of supremacy emanating from Margaret towards not only Egyptians but also towards her husband, as she claims that he is 'rubbish' just like his people. The use of this term, as discussed before, implies unhygienic, which in turn suggests the idea that the citizens are uncivilized and backwards. In another instance, Margaret shows her belief that Americans are far more unimportant and better than the rest. There is also the idea that American blood is too 'expensive' to be donated or used to help the needy in Egypt that have been affected by the events of the bomb.

However, there is a slight discrepancy in the level of differentiation that occurs in the films. In terms of the strangeness and perhaps extraterrestrial quality, *The Kingdom* can be perceived to engage more in this than in *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') yet it is used more so to alienate or 'other' the Fundamentalists. By creating Abu Hamza as a mysterious and almost supernatural character and giving Faris as well as Haytham a familial context creating as sense of familiarity,

it perhaps reduces the systematic differentiation to be directed more so to the Extremists than the Moderate Muslims. This is also supported by the supposed Americanization of Faris as he is made as somewhat of a pseudo or honorary American in the eyes of the audience. Faris is also shown to be a peaceful family man and soldier as well as practicing Muslim. In doing so, it is as if Faris and Haytham are assimilated towards the United States as more civilized, thus separating them from the Fundamentalists. While in the film *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') there is very little evidence that provides the audience with the same qualities. There is somewhat of a single portrayal of Muslims and this is represented by the Fundamentalists, leading the audience to assume that this is the true depiction. Thus, there is a sense that the whole population is backwards and uncivilized as they are lumped together.

6.1.2 All Non-Western Countries are the Same

The second characteristic is explained by Said as the "abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a 'classical' Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities" [Said, 1978]. From the evidence provided in the two films, there is moderate engagement in the lumping together of all Middle Eastern countries. This can be perhaps ascribed to the fact that there are only characters from either Saudi Arabia or Egypt in the respective films.

However, this particular part of the theory may perhaps be swayed into the direction of lumping together all the types of Islam. In other words, one could argue that this could refer to the lack of differentiation between the Fundamentalist Muslim and the Moderate Muslim. If this dogma is looked at in this sense there is evidence that can be opened up for debate.

When considering the film *The Kingdom* in relation to this part of the theory, the evidence is not supportive. As mentioned numerous times previously, the movie does create a gap between the Extremists and the Moderates. The Middle Eastern characters in the film are not the same 'classical' representation Said is talking about. Abu Hamza is, however painted in somewhat of a classical sense of the Orient. His disposition carries the same qualities Said often refers to in his book. He is created as peculiar and unapproachable throughout the movie, as many previous 'terrorists' have in other film representations. However, such an archetype is perhaps broken in the portrayal of the character of Faris and Haytham. The depictions of these two characters stand apart from those of Abu Hamza and his followers. Faris and Haytham are illustrated to the audience in such a way that they appear to be amenable and common and not alien. This is especially evident in their practice and interpretation of the Islamic religion, which is separate from that of Abu Hamza. As it is clear from the representations that Abu Hamza is the embodiment of the violent sect while Faris and Haytham embody the peaceful followers of the religion. This evidence refutes this characterization of the Said's theory.

In *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'), this dogma can in a sense be contested when referring to differentiations. One could argue that 'classical' stereotypical representations of Muslims do exist in the film. There is a distance created between the Fundamentalist group and Adam and Hanan's Family. Yet, there is a very slight degree of approachability even though Fathi is epitomized as one of the primary villains in the film. It is however hard not concretely say that what is portrayed classifies as a differentiation in the representation of Islamic followers. Although, it is evident that ordinary citizens, ordinary Egyptians are depicted in the film for the audience's viewing, the visuals of Islam are perhaps lumped together with those of the Fundamentalists. As mentioned previously, there appears to be a one-sided point of view of the religion. Since the audience is not given any clear indications that characters such as Hanan or Adam retain a form of spirituality, subconsciously the viewer could perhaps take the representation at face value and assume the Extremists are the religion.

In short, this characteristic described by Said, is not directly applicable to the two films in question. This is only if what is referred to here is that there is a lumping together of all of the different members of the Islamic religion. To compare the two films, one would deduce that the degree of refutability of these dogmas lies more with *The Kingdom* than with the film *Al-Akhar* ('The Other').

6.1.3 Generalized Orient

The third dogma, according to Said "the Orient is eternal, uniform and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically objective" [Said, 1978]. Although, Said believes that is solely done from a Western standpoint, one could argue that this can be applicable to the East generalizing the East itself. With this in mind, there is engagement of this characteristic in both films under analysis. However, it does not apply to the depictions in the films of the Moderate or 'ordinary' Muslims.

In terms of *The Kingdom*, this can merely be seen in the representations of the followers of the Abu Hamza. There are very common and systematic generalizations made about the Fundamentalists portrayed. The prime examples of this can be viewed in the clothing that they display almost throughout the film. They often appear in Jellabiya and headdress or wearing the typical black ski masks. Such a representation is archetypal when it comes to describing or creating visual images of the Orient. Furthermore, there is evidence of the oversimplification of the activities engage in and the utterances they use. Like in many films typical representations include Fundamentalists focused on building bombs and praising the attacks they have accomplished. In this aspect *The Kingdom* does employ such generalizations in their depictions of Extremists.

With regards to Al-Akhar ('The Other'), this feature of the theory is also seen in some of the portrayals in the films. Aside from representations of Fathi, which vary and are not uniform, there are some generalizations made the Fundamentalist group in the same way executed by the film The Kingdom. This is presented to the audience also in the form of costume in terms of the 'brothers'. They only appear in the white Jellabiyas and scarves, similar representations and generalizations made in the film from Western cinema. Moreover, the images that emerge also portray them either carrying weapons, cleaning weapons or praying. Thus, there is repetition of the same type of common imagery of the Extremists group in both films. Ultimately this is evidence of the West as well as the East displaying the consistent illustrations that support the notion described by Said about the Orient.

6.1.4 Fearing and Controlling the Orient

The final dogma states, "the Orient is at the bottom, something either to be feared or to controlled" [Said, 1978]. Again similar to the pervious dogma, this attribute cannot be applied to the representations of the Moderate Muslims. It is however, a little relevant to be analyzed from the perspective of the portrayals of the Fundamentalist group. The two films in question demonstrate this characteristic when representing the Islamic Extremists.

When viewing The Kingdom, there is the perception in a way that the Orient is to be controlled and feared. Although these separate attributes are directed towards two different groups in a sense. In terms of the representation of the Extremist Muslims, there are various signs in the film that lead the audience to a feeling of fear with regards to this group. This is particularly applicable to Abu Hamza who is described as "a man who can plan the mass murder of women and children then go home and sleep soundly". Such an

account can portray him as a man with no conscience, which would suggest he is capable of any evil. Furthermore, as discussed before, by having Abu Hamza's face cover with only his eyes showing portrays his character as being the stereotypical villain of the film. Members of the group also appear in the same light, depicted wearing black ski masks, which are often worn by the archetypal criminal. These signs instill more alarm into the viewer; therefore they become frightened of Abu Hamza and his followers. In addition, in the film it could be argued that there is a slight sense that the Orient needs to be controlled. There is evidence of this with respect to the Saudi police and authorities. Although it is not done blatantly, there are hints of a need to control the situation and investigation in the country. However, in the film there is a somewhat modest degree of this attribute displayed by the FBI team towards the police.

Similarly, Al-Akhar ('The Other') engages in the comparable introductions of fear to the audience in terms of the Fundamentalist group. Though the concern is not as apparent as it is in *The Kingdom* it is nonetheless existent. Fathi, the face of the group, is again frightful to the audience. Although, we are able to perhaps comprehend some of the possible reasons for his joining of the group as well as his background, he still remains at some distance from the other characters. As a character Fathi, is disowned by his mother after he hits her and kidnaps his sister for personal gain, signifying to the audience his isolation and perhaps lack of humanity. Such signs cause the audience to view Fathi with trepidation and horror at his actions towards his family. Moreover, Fathi believes that Western women need to be purified, comments such as this give the perception that he is evil. The 'brothers' in the film are also portrayed as ill doers; as they are displayed to the audience cleaning their weapons, suggesting their malicious and violent intentions. The instilment of fear is merely applied to the Fundamentalists represented in the film and not so much other characters.

Ultimately, there is evidence of the attribute of fear and control of the Orient, particularly the Fundamentalist group, in both films with respect to the theory. The two films apply these emotions in similar ways and are directed at the same groups in order to achieve the same effect of separation between

subjects. However, there is perhaps a higher degree of this displayed in the film *The Kingdom* than in the *Al-Akhar* ('The Other').

6.1.5 Summary

Before taking an overall look at the theory and its application to the two films it is important to note that although Said's premise lies with Western depictions of the East this can be refuted. There is evidence from the pervious that this theory can be applied to Eastern points of view about the East itself. Furthermore, both films sustain and give credence to the theory in very similar ways despite the fact that they originate from different cinematic regions.

In terms of the various dogmas presented by Said, the films do not support them all, or at least in varying degrees. This is most evident when looking at the second characteristic of the theory. Even when skewing this particular attribute to suggest the lumping together of Islam a whole and not just non-Western countries. Though this is perhaps more representative in the film *The Kingdom* than in *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'), there is still a slight degree of a separation between in different sects or interpretations of the Islamic religion.

With respect to the first dogmas, although perhaps not highly linked to the research questions, is still somewhat relevant. The illustration of superiority of the West over the East is evident in both films. However, it is emphasize more so in the film *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') than in *The Kingdom*. This is due to the fact that in *Al-Akhar* ('The Other') it is directed towards the Orient as a whole, from the point of view of Margaret. While in *The Kingdom*, although still apparent in a general sense of the Orient, this occurs to a less degree. It could be argued that it is aimed more so at the Extremist group, due to the Americanization of Faris making him more familiar to the audience.

Finally, when referring to the last two dogmas, which discuss generalizations about the Orient and the fact that they need to be fear or controlled, one could contend that it is again employed in terms of the representations of the Extremists. Both films utilize certain tools and signs to create a barrier between other characters or even between the audience and Fundamentalist group. The Extremists are portrayed using a generalized way and perceived as savage or untrustworthy.

Ultimately, with respect to both films, Said's theory is credible and applicable to some degree, even when the East portrays itself in a sense. However, Said's premise can be refuted as the films to a large extent and more so evident in *The Kingdom*, support the theory when representing the Fundamentalist group and not the Orient as a whole. It could be argued that Said's theory can be adjusted not just to how the East can often represented itself but also how specific subjects or parts of the East can be represented and not solely in a general sense of the Orient.

6.2 Foucault & Gramsci's Perspectives

Said's theory and arguments are greatly influenced and supported by theorists Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. The following will briefly discuss the theorist's ideas on knowledge and power and how they might relate to the two films analyzed.

Foucault premise is deeply rooted in the relationship between knowledge and power. Stuart Hall summarized Foucault's standpoint by drawing it's parallels to Orientalism; "a *discourse* produces, through different practices of *representation*...a form of *racialized knowledge of the Other* (Orientalism) deeply implicated in the operations of *power* (imperialism)" [Hall, 1997]. Of course one of these 'practices' would include representation in film. The idea of power through imperialism is not predominately evident in the two films, yet there are

traces of it in the portrayals. However, the type of imperialist control is presented more so from a neo-colonialist perspective. With Faris and Adam being main characters that are influenced by American popular culture. Furthermore, what is common in both films is the racialization and 'othering' of the Fundamentalist groups. This in term implies a sense of superiority over the Extremists, which is very part of Foucault's arguments.

However, there are two main problem s with Foucault's ideas, which would render his premise inapplicable to this thesis. The first predicament lies Foucault's questioning of whether *true* representation exists [Kennedy, 2000]. He argues that to some extent there is always some form of misrepresentation [Kennedy, 2000]. And while there may be some weight to this argument, whether or not the representations in the films are accurate is somewhat irrelevant as the focus of this thesis is more on *what* message the representations send. The other problem is Foucault's conception of power in that it is not "monopolized by on centre" it is more a "net-like organization" [Hall, 1997]. This assertion ignores the evidence of American or Western dominance over the Middle East. Furthermore, there is no support of this argument in either The Kingdom or Al-Akhar ('The Other').

Another significant theorist utilized in Said's theory of Orientalism is Gramsci. The central principle Gramsci recognizes is the concept of *hegemony* and the "collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans" [Said, 1978]. Gramsci's standpoint, which can be skewed to refer to the West and no limited to Europe, is very much embedded in Said's theory and primary argument. There is evidence of this idea of hegemony in films as Gramsci suggests that there is a collective notion in Western ideas of the Orient [Hall, 1997]. There is proof a union of ideas/representation with regards to the Islamic Fundamentalists in both films. Furthermore, there is also slight evidence suggesting this hegemony of thought on the Orient as a whole when refereeing to the rhetoric used.

Ultimately, as with any theory, problems and criticism arise that contradict certain arguments. Foucault and Gramsci's assertions are valid and convincing, they are evident in Said's foundations. However, Said's Orientalism is best applicable to the two films in question as it combines the influence of their ideas. Said's perspective on the theory, despite its flaws, creates more accurate illustration.

6.3 Answering the Research Questions

The following will briefly review and answer the research questions posed in the introduction of this thesis.

6.3.1 Representations of Islam and Muslims

One the central research questions are: How Islam and/or Muslims represented in the two films from Western Cinema and Arab Cinema? What meaning is derived from films' verbal and non-verbal structures in their portrayal of Muslims?

Representations of Islam as well as Muslims in both films vary and there is evidence of this in the analysis. In the film *The Kingdom*, Islam is portrayed in both a negative and positive light. There are representations of the Extremist, violent side of Islam, with Abu Hamza as the figured head. Various signs in terms from the clothing the group wears, to their actions and utterances lead the audience to believe that they are to be feared and that they are malicious. Thus, such signs lead to associations with the religion itself. However, there are also representations of a much more peaceful and kinder side of Islam, with Faris and Haytham being the most illustrative. The images portrayed in film, especially in light of the fact that the characters signify honor and morality, suggest to the audience that they are harmonious and tolerant. Thus, Islam is seen in the same respect, illustrating the softer and peaceful side of the religion.

Similarly, in *Al-Akhar* ("The Other") there are depictions of the Islamic faith in a negative light. The villainous actions of Fundamentalist Fathi along with his 'brothers' and their disregard of the value of human life, suggest to the audience that followers of Islam can be wicked. There are various signs of this, much like in *The Kingdom*; it is often portrayed in their actions and ill will.

However, as mentioned numerous times previously, there is a lack in the representations of the more peaceful side of the religion. Although the significance of the building of the religious compound does suggest a willingness to unit the three faiths in harmony, this ideal is destroyed perhaps from the start of the film. Thus, such lacking provides the audience with only one point of view and perhaps suggesting that this is the most representative side. In addition, one could perhaps even claim that there is an anger directed towards the faith with regards to what Adam does to Hanan.

6.3.2 Distinguishing Between Muslims

The second question posed is: Do the films from both regions attempt to distinguish or portray a distinction between the 'everyday' Muslim and the Islamic Fundamentalist/Extremist?

To an extent this question can be answered in similar fashion to the pervious question. Nonetheless, to reiterate, both films do in some way make distinctions from the Islamic Fundamentalists. The Kingdom does, however, emphasize this more. With the employment of an adjusted Orientalist theory there is a sense of othering and separation of the Fundamentalist group from the rest of the characters. Furthermore, this results in somewhat of a clear distinction or boundary between the moderate/'everyday' Muslim and the Extremist Muslim.

Accordingly, in the film Al-Akhar ('The Other'), as mentioned previously, there is similar utilization of the theory yet within a different context. The film also makes use of Said's dogmas in order to 'other' the same subjects, the Islamic Fundamentalists. However, the separation made is more between the Extremist group members and the citizens or ordinary 'people' of Egypt. The characters portrayed are not displayed practicing the faith or expressing their spirituality.

Although, there is a lack in the representation of the moderate Muslim, there is nonetheless a difference emphasized between the two groups.

6.3.3 Difference & Similarity in Representation

The final research question expressed is: What are the commonalities and differences in the representation of Islam in Western cinema compared to Arab cinema?

There are some commonalities in the representations of Islam between the two films. One of the main or perhaps only parallels drawing the two films together is the portrayal of the Extremist group. The signs presented indicate to the audience that the members are 'evil', 'savage', 'heartless', 'immoral', 'frightful' and so on. These are many of the same traits expressed by Said in his discussion of the representation of the Orient. As mentioned before, there are also similarities in the groups clothing, action, sayings etc. Furthermore, another commonality with respect to the faith is in reference to the endings of both films. The perspective is that there is a futility in the efforts to reconcile the tensions involved with the religions in regards to the current political situation.

On the other hand, there are also a few differences in portrayals of the faith between *The Kingdom* and *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'). Representations differ when it comes to the portraits of the 'everyday' Muslim, which has been reiterated on several occasions. *The Kingdom* represents a beautiful side of Islam with the familial values associated with the faith. On the other hand, *Al-Akhar* ('The Other'), even though Hanan as well as other characters are assumed to be Muslim by cultural traditions of their names, there is a deficit in the portrayal of their religious beliefs.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

To sum up, it can be argued that Said's theory is applicable to a certain extent in both films. It is important to note however, that although the suggestion of the superior of West is not particularly included in the research questions, it is nonetheless relevant. This is due to the fact that such an implication of a hierarchy can perhaps in sense aid in the differentiation and isolation between the Fundamentalists and the moderate Muslims.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

In light of the above, this thesis attempted to follow the aims and the research questions discussed in the introductory chapter. The main aim of this thesis was to try and compare the representations of Islam in films from separate regions that perhaps share some tension. And while the films may not provide the most well-rounded portrayals, the medium nonetheless offers the audience a glimpse into a few possible representations. As mentioned previously, the medium of film is a powerful resource that can influence, possibly in subconscious ways how the audience might feel about certain peoples, cultures or countries.

In order to effectively analyze the two films from somewhat contrasting regions, the method of textual analysis with an emphasis on semiotics was utilized. The signs that were present in the films examined the meaning behind certain scenes or certain conversations or even the type of clothing characters wore. In addition, there was also the employment of Chatman's ideas about the narrative structure, which argues an investigation into not *what* is being told but more about *how* it is being told, as well as the implied audiences in the two films. Furthermore, this thesis also briefly looked at some of the myths that can be deduced from the signs established in the films. The two films were analyzed separately in order to properly understand their meanings and they were then compared. Such methods of analysis gave way to results and conclusions about what the films are attempting to convey to the audience about the Middle East, Islam and its relationship with the West. Immediately following these deductions, the films were explored with respect to Edward Said's theory of Orientalism.

The film from Western cinema, *The Kingdom*, gave way to some interesting findings. Conceivably, the myth that the United States is far more

developed and remains separate from the so-called underdeveloped Middle East is minimally maintained throughout the movie. Some of the signs discussed in the pervious chapters suggest that while the Middle East may be competent the West is held at a higher standard. Additionally, the film suggests to the audience that there are different sects and followers of the Islamic religion. There is an emphasis that while there are Muslims that believe that violence is the solution to achieving their aims, there are also other types of spirituality as with all faiths. The Kingdom provides images of Muslims that are tolerant, honorable and ethical followers, who are also in a sense Westernized or at the very least present qualities valued by the West. Furthermore, Said's theory comes to light when there is an emphasis on the backwardness and barbaric qualities of the Fundamentalists group, resulting in great divide between the two categories of believers. This influences the audience in such a way that they perceive distinctive difference in representations of the faith and not just generalizations about a diverse group of peoples in the Middle East. However, at the end the audience is left with the daunting thought that despite the acknowledgement of a separation from the Fundamentalists, the conflict between East and West is ever-present.

The film representing the Arab perspective, Al-Akhar ('The Other') also suggests other fascinating insights. Much like The Kingdom there is an indication of the myth that America sustains its position at the top of the development hierarchy. The meanings derived from the signs inform the viewer of the superiority of the Western world and its people. We are also able to perceive a divide in between ordinary citizens of the Middle East and the malicious sect of Islam. The characters emphasize a separation of the two worlds, presenting the fundamentalist group as being almost completely isolated from the rest of the Arab society. These points are cemented by Said's theory, which although hypothesizes the alienation of the Orient is applicable to the Fundamentalist representations. However, there is a void left to the audience in terms of an account of a more modest Islam. It is of course reasonable to deduce that the characters portrayed in the film do represent moderate Muslims, and yet there a few signs to indicate there is a practice of the faith, thus the Extremist group

maintains the picture of the religion. The associations with the faith then become linked to violence and wickedness, as there is no suggestion of anything otherwise. Furthermore, as emphasized by the myth presented, there is an assumption that strict followers of the faith are an indication of Fundamentalism. Along with this assumption one can deduce from the signs presented that there is frustration attached to the faith. Ultimately, the film ends with a similar sentiment as *The Kingdom*; efforts towards tolerance and a resolution of tension are futile.

The results deduced from the two films could be seen as both predictable and supersizing in the same instance. While it is foreseeable that suggestions of superiority of West would exist in the film deriving from Hollywood, it remains unexpected that such portrayal would be evident in a film from the Middle East. Interestingly, both films make use of the Orientalist theory in similar ways in order to set aside Extremist followers and bring to light ordinary Arabs and Muslims in the case of *The Kingdom*. There are also unanticipated parallels in the generalized illustrations of the Fundamentalist group, which are in sense anticipated in films from the West, however it would seem shocking in the film from Arab cinema. Furthermore, it is unsuspecting that there would be a higher degree of or more emphasis on the distinction between the Fundamentalist Muslim and the Moderate Muslims in a film from the West. And in addition, it is most interesting that representation of Islam itself would to be portrayed in a more positive light in the film *The Kingdom*. The expectation would be that *Al-Akhar*, a film from Arab cinema, would represent the faith in a more accurate and comprehensible manner.

Ultimately, it is important to make note and question whether or not these films are representative of the whole industry of films released in the two regions. Of course, it is obvious that the industry is diverse and that all films presented discuss a wide variety of issues and depict Islam in perhaps dissimilar ways. These films represent miniscule versions of the possible representations of how the West illustrates the East and how the East illustrates itself in a sense. It would be false to assume that these films are a sufficient enough sample to

answer the research questions posed in this thesis in a definitive way. However, the conclusions reached about portrayals do provide a possible and perhaps valid response to the inquiries. It is important nevertheless to remain conscious that there are other possible representations from the widespread variety of films produced from each region's cinematic industry.

In terms of Said's Orientalist theory, it is perhaps important to touch upon the premise of the theory itself as well as the possible problems experienced during the course of the discussion. Although, Said limits his theory to solely generalize about the Orient as a whole, as made evident by the findings in this thesis there is evidence that can perhaps refute this standing. For the most part the theory is possibly only applicable to the Fundamentalist groups in the two films. Even though certain parts of the theory are employed in reference to all of the 'Orient' and its people, a large part of the premise is valid when it comes to the violent Muslims. In this respect, one could also use the theory to investigate the possibility that the East could also 'other' itself in a sense. It is conceivable, despite the criticisms, that the theory with some possible adjustments is still relevant with regards to contemporary texts about the Middle East.

As with any qualitative forms of research there are a few problems that may come to light in the analysis and findings. A certain margin of subjectivity is always a possible factor when formulating conclusions. It is impossible to say with absolute certainty that the results presented in this thesis are unequivocally objective. All interpretations must include a clause for bias as qualitative research is often considered not to be repeatable. The points of view of different researchers can reach dissimilar conclusions with regards to the perceptions about the films or other mediums. It is the job of researcher to deduce the 'most likely' interpretations about the texts under analysis. Also no single interpretation is the correct and undeniable one as there is no right or wrong answer. Thus, what has been attempted in this thesis is the citation of the most generally accepted interpretations about the representations of the Islamic faith. The research has as much as possible endeavored to remain objective when

analyzing the films while making assumptions about the 'most likely' understandings about what the texts present.

Finally, all research conducted can result in the challenge for further or other research in the same area. As mentioned previously, it is difficult to determine whether or not the films are a representative sample for the cinema industry's representations. Thus, it would perhaps be relevant to perform supplementary research into this matter by widening the sample size in such a way that the result is a more representative. Another possible research path to pursue would be to perhaps make comparisons films from various countries in the West and various countries in the Middle East. It is conceivable that this would conjure up more interesting results and conclusions in the representations of Islam.

That said, the research conducted in this thesis does breed some interesting and at times surprising results. And while they may perhaps be to some degree slightly subjective conclusions about the representations of Islam and its followers they are yet still significant and viable.

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